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THIS ISSUE OF THE *EDITH WHARTON REVIEW* IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF DANIEL SCOTT MARSHALL (NOVEMBER 10, 1953-OCTOBER 14, 2002), LONG-TIME SCHOLAR OF EDITH WHARTON AND FRIEND OF THE EDITH WHARTON SOCIETY.

Introduction

Kathy Fedorko and Irene Goldman-Price,
Special Memorial Issue Editors

Scott Marshall's association with both the Edith Wharton Society and Edith Wharton Restoration at The Mount in Lenox, Massachusetts, began in 1983. Scott served as the Restoration's first intern in 1985, and, after receiving an M. S. in historic preservation from the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University in 1986, he went on to become Archivist, Historian, Assistant Director, Deputy Director, Program Director, and Senior Vice President at The Mount. Anyone lucky enough to have participated in one of Scott's walking tours, "Edith Wharton's Old New York," remembers the animation and joy Scott brought to his scholarship about Wharton and the New York City she lived in. He brought that same energetic joy to his restoration work at The Mount. One of his many accomplishments while there was to research and write the historical section of The Mount's Historic Structure Report, the document upon which all

restoration and interpretation of the house rests. The Report was published in 1997 as *The Mount: Home of Edith Wharton*, now in its third printing.

Scott's scholarship also included work on Edith Wharton and film, about which he organized sessions for the Wharton conference in Paris in 1991 and the conference at Yale in 1995, both sponsored by the Edith Wharton Society. His article, "Edith Wharton and Kate Spencer," appears in the *Norton Critical Edition of Ethan Frome*, and his essay, "A History of Edith Wharton on Film," was published in Japan in *Edith Wharton's Two Worlds: America and Europe*. Scott also published several articles in the *Edith Wharton Review* and was working on an edition of Wharton's poetry when he died.

Kathy Fedorko remembers when she first met Scott, early in his career:

His face was open and welcoming, clearly someone to talk to among the many others who seemed to know one another already. "What brings you to this lecture on Edith

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Wharton's houses?" I asked. "Are you a Wharton fan too?" In the early stages of my dissertation in January 1984, I had made the trip into New York for David Lowe's lecture at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum on Wharton's houses in New York and Paris, eager to hear what he had to say about the writer who had become the center of my life and eager to meet others engaged with Wharton and her work.

After Scott introduced himself I learned from him about Edith Wharton Restoration, which I was delighted to find out about. He was equally pleased to hear about the newly formed Edith Wharton Society begun by Annette Zilversmit. A few days later I received a post card from Scott about our meeting and requesting Annette's contact information; I, in turn, sent my first check to Edith Wharton Restoration to become a "Friend of Edith Wharton." As Scott said in a later letter, "It's always very reassuring to find that there are other people who love EW and her books as much as I do."

This issue of *Edith Wharton Review* also contains Annette Zilversmit's memory of her first meeting with Scott. In it, as in the memories offered here by Julie Olin-Ammentorp and Linda Costanzo Cahir and in the eulogy given for Scott at The Mount, we can see Scott as eager student and scholar, dedicated professional, and generous, warm friend to all he met. Irene Goldman-Price offers this assessment of what Scott meant to the Edith Wharton Society:

The Edith Wharton Society has been known over the years for its collegiality and the generous way that scholars share information, collaborate on papers, essays, and books, and nurture junior scholars. While I know that some of the credit for this belongs to the early founders of the Society, I believe strongly that Scott Marshall served an important role in fostering that cooperation and collaboration. No one was ever more generous in sharing ideas and information and helping people to connect with others interested in their field. Wharton scholars came to The Mount, often quite alone. Scott would meet and talk with each of us almost as if he were Wharton's nephew, receiving visitors in her absence. Then he would pass the news of one person's visit and work on to another, and another, and so we learned, through Scott, of what we each

were doing, and when we met at a conference it was as if we already knew each other; we were linked, as it were, by having shared the light of Scott's warmth and intelligence. My own files are peppered with little notes from Scott pointing me to a letter or passage or anecdote that would be exactly germane to the area I was exploring at the moment and often the name of another scholar working in a similar vein.

We're pleased in this issue to offer you three fine scholarly essays in areas of interest to Scott. Julie Olin-Ammentorp's essay on Wharton's war elegies examines Wharton's changing attitude towards World War I through the changing tone of her elegies for friends who died during the course of it. Lisa Weckerle and Augusta Rohrbach both examine films made of Wharton's work, Weckerle looking at the 1939 film, *The Old Maid*, and Rohrbach at the recent film of *The House of Mirth*. While Weckerle argues that unless a filmmaker captures Wharton's narrative voice he is unlikely to capture her embedded feminist sensibility, Rohrbach demonstrates some ways in which Terence Davies achieves in his film the social critique that Weckerle argues Casey Robinson did not achieve years earlier.

The final contribution to this issue comes from Scott himself, with thanks to Clare Colquitt for bringing it to our attention and Bryce Hill for allowing us to use it. Scott created a dramatic reading for two people, centering both on the importance of The Mount in Wharton's psyche and on the close relationship between Wharton and Henry James. Its title, something James wrote to Wharton, sums up for us what we have felt about Scott as we prepared this issue: that we are "more & more never apart."

I Met Him Through a Personal Ad: or How It All Began

Annette Zilversmit
Long Island University

I met Scott Marshall (and Scott Marshall met the Edith Wharton Society) through a personal ad. Yes, the kind that single women put in newspapers and magazines to find men. But I was not a single woman, and I wasn't intentionally or particularly seeking men only, but that is what happened. It was 1984, and a fledgling Edith Wharton Society (no more than thirty-five members) had been formed at a

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recent convention of the Modern Language Association. I was the first editor of its then four-page newsletter which I had just sent out. In it I placed the personal ad: *WANTED. People in the New York City area interested in helping build the Edith Wharton Society and possibly working on the Newsletter.* I said to contact me and even gave my phone number. (We did things like that in those days.)

Only two people answered the ad, both men! One was Alfred Bendixen, then a young assistant professor at Barnard College, and that meeting is a story in itself, the start of Bendixen's active role in the Society which soon led to his forming the now mightily flourishing American Literature Society (ALA). And the other man who phoned said he had received his BA in English from New York University only two years ago, was unemployed and did not know exactly what he was going to do with his life. But he had found Edith Wharton as an undergraduate, fell in love with her and her fiction, was determined to build his life around these passions, and even had some ideas how to do it. Yes, he was interested in furthering the Edith Wharton Society and its Newsletter. We agreed to meet for coffee in a storefront attached to a gourmet grocery store, ZABAR, on the Upper West Side where I live. (There were no coffee shops or cappuccino bars, let alone Starbucks, in those days, and I didn't know if our meeting would last a full lunch.)

After a few minutes of hesitancy, we almost immediately recognized each other at the long counter which served as the coffee bar—a middle-aged, obviously New Yorker professor of English and a very well-mannered, soft-spoken, curly-haired young man in tweedy jacket, dark shirt, and tie, distinguished by scholarly but then fashionable round steel rimmed glasses and carrying a thin, properly worn briefcase. He seemed hesitant and shy, the first and last time he was with me, but being the professor used to drawing out younger minds, I broached the issue at once. Why Edith Wharton? An animated conversation started immediately and, I can say so now, it was interrupted only by his death.

Scott told me he not only loved Wharton's oeuvre but equally Wharton herself as a fashionable turn-of-the-century New York woman who defied her society's expectations and became a writer who satirized her society yet kept affection for it. And then he realized that the settings of this society, the landscapes of her narratives and life, still lay all around him. From his classroom at NYU, he could look out on the first "neighborhood" of this then fledgling society, Washington Square, with its north flank still lined with red brick, white-stooped, symmetrical brownstones, one of which Undine Spragg climbs to in

her famous dinner at the Dagonets. For the two years since his graduation, he said he had been walking the streets of lower Manhattan, researching the architecture and mapping out the places of Wharton's and her characters' lives. Scott then reached down into that thin briefcase near his chair and took out an ample folder with a carefully drawn, gridded map of lower Manhattan from 4th Street to 26th Street, from Washington Square through Union Square and Gramercy Park to Madison Square. Labeled throughout were all the landmarks of Wharton's life and those in her fiction. He had made a walking tour possible of this almost vanished old New York. Much had disappeared, but Scott had also photographed drawings and photos of places that no longer existed and had them in an accompanying folder.

The purpose of this unbelievably graphed and marked walking tour was more than a scholarly endeavor. It was to be the lever to his professional life. He of course wanted Wharton Society members to take the walking tour, but, more importantly, he had discovered that Edith Wharton's country home in the Berkshires had recently been bought by interested New Yorkers who were to restore it and open it to the public. Here was an intact piece of architecture, although in need of much repair, but one which Wharton herself had designed and lived in. Scott told me he had immediately visited it, unknown to anyone, and had decided that somehow he was going to be part of its running. He had already applied to the degree program in historical preservation given at Columbia University for the fall, but connecting to The Mount was his immediate priority. Although he and the director of Edith Wharton Restoration had never met and did not know of each other, he was going to call him and offer to give the walking tour, to be sponsored by the Restoration and hopefully the Edith Wharton Society. He would publicize the tour in local newspapers, which might even, he wistfully confided, flush out interested benefactors. What he wanted from me was my belief in all aspects of his project and my willingness to be one of the walking tour guides. Truthfully, I believed at this point that Scott was betting on a long shot, but I encouraged him.

Two weeks later, Scott called to say that the then-director of The Mount was interested in doing the walking tour. Four months later the three of us—the director, Scott, and—met fifty people at the Arch at Washington Square and gave simultaneous two-hour walking tours of lower Manhattan, ending with coffee and rich discussion. Scott became almost immediately a volunteer at The Mount but within the

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year was officially hired by the Restoration; and, except for a brief hiatus, he never left. The Mount flourished, the Edith Wharton Society flourished, our friendship flourished, and, most of all, Edith Wharton became a significant, well-known, and well-read writer. I will always believe in personal ads, and I will always miss Scott.

"In Memory"

Edith Wharton Restoration Board Chairman Barbara de Marneffe presented the following eulogy at the memorial service for Scott Marshall held in The Mount's stable on October 18, 2002. Our thanks to Stephanie Copeland, President of Edith Wharton Restoration, for allowing us to reprint the eulogy.

Scott was an extraordinary human being, deeply caring, exceptionally giving, a man whose heart and intellect were set on fire by the soul and sensibility of Edith Wharton. He dedicated his life to research about her life and work and to educating others about her genius. We are the lucky recipients of his devotion. When Stephanie Copeland came to The Mount in 1993, Scott became her oak, her friend, and her partner in building and rekindling appreciation of Edith Wharton through his deep erudition, his scholarship, and his sharing.

What he has left us is incomparable in value. His life's work is the cornerstone of this monument to one of America's great writers and multi-talented women.

But what is most deeply etched in our memories, and what I want to pay particular tribute to today, is Scott's elegant personality. Was there ever a man more caring, more giving, and more polite in all his dealings with everyone he met? I doubt it. In every encounter, on every occasion, he gave gladly and unselfishly of his time, his knowledge, himself.

Saying goodbye to such a good person is extremely hard for us all. But he will never be gone from our hearts, from these walls, or from this property. The work he did here is an enduring legacy to our nation and to the world.

Reprinted with permission from *The Mount*, 23 (Fall 2002):12, a publication of Edith Wharton Restoration in Lenox, Massachusetts.

A Tribute to Scott Marshall

Linda Costanzo Cahir
Centenary College

Scott Marshall was what Henry James would call *the real thing*. In my system of values, that is the highest accolade I can bestow upon a person: someone who lives fully and honestly within his own definitions of worth. The capacity to do so is as rare as it is estimable.

Scott would smile to see me write such words about him. Our relationship, characterized by lightness and mirth and filled with chatter about movies and exchanges about Hollywood hearsay, hardly seems the stuff of the weighty esteem in which I hold him. But Scott's grasp of lightness lent weight to my regard of him, as did the ponderous weight with which he approached his work.

The Deputy Director of Edith Wharton Restoration at The Mount, a historian, archivist, and Wharton authority of the first ilk, Scott also was the executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in New York City and an alumnus of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (Columbia University). Scott and I were both alumni of NYU's English Department, a shared experience that led to our swapping anecdotes about our professors and engaging in debates over the best (and worst) places to eat in the Village. Invariably, Scott's taste, like his stories, surpassed mine; but my knowledge of the worst Village spots eclipsed his, something he found entertaining—or forgivable—in me.

The first time I met Scott was at a reception he was hosting at The Mount. He had just published his Wharton filmography (1996), which was a wonderful work—long-needed and important—and I told him so. That evening, chatter led to chatter, and we lit upon a lengthy discussion of *The Marriage Playground* (1929), a ridiculously frothy silent film translation of Wharton's novel, *The Children*. Our discussion became so engaging that night that he led me out of The Mount's dining room, where the reception was in fine, full-swing, and into the Butler's Pantry, where the humorous shortcomings of *The Playground* could be bantered about between us in more a snug, easy, and oddly appropriate surrounding. I was struck that evening not only by his charm, but by the gentle modesty with which he regarded his own work—his writing and research—which was consistently so elegant and expanding.

Scott Marshall's work was unfailingly excellent. I was reminded of this yet again when I read his book, *The Mount: The Home of Edith Wharton*, a gracefully composed, painstakingly researched, and exquisitely

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designed study of the history and restoration of Wharton's Lenox, Massachusetts mansion. The book reminded me of Wharton's own *The Decoration of Houses*. What R.W.B. Lewis wrote of *The Decoration* could be said of Scott's book: the work "moves learnedly and knowingly from one feature to another of an upper-class private home" (78). Like Wharton's study, Scott Marshall's book retains the tone of decorum appropriate to the topic, while providing an insider's view of a closed world.

The last time I saw Scott was at Lincoln Center in September 2000, when he traveled down from Lenox to attend the press screening and press conference being held for *The House of Mirth*. It had taken me several months to do so, but I had finally succeeded in making contact with both Terence Davies, the film's director, and Olivia Stewart, the producer. Both had agreed to give me private interviews in New York for a piece I was writing for *Literature/Film Quarterly*. After my third round of telephone conversations with Stewart (who was in London at the time), she offered me extra admission tickets to the film's press screening and conference. I readily accepted the additional passes and invited Scott and a few other great Wharton people living in the New York area to attend these closed events.

Just prior to the screening, Scott came with me for a conversation with Stewart, which took place in a simple coffee shop, across the street from Alice Tully Hall. Olivia Stewart is all kinetic energy, high speed, and intense voltage (even when sitting down, sipping espresso), and our interview came complete with incoming cell phone calls to her from Italy, Brazil, London, and L.A. As we spoke, she simultaneously answered all her calls, keeping the conversations short and clipped and talking only about specific production matters that apparently arose moment to moment. Watching her in action was an experience. Scott seemed to think so, too; and quiet though he remained throughout the short interview, I saw that that glimpse into film production in progress—that brief time with Olivia Stewart—had entertained him thoroughly.

Shortly afterwards, we Wharton people sat, all in a row, at what was the first official American screening of *The House of Mirth*. Terence Davies, who also wrote the screenplay, had made alterations of varying degrees of significance to Wharton's text; and Scott and I, two film aficionados with a long, shared history of watching Edith Wharton movies, stole glances at one another—touched base, as it were—throughout the screening. We were interested in the same three things: the film, itself, the specific (and similar) ways in which we both were responding to the

movie, and the knowledgeable reactions of our fellow Wharton friends who had accompanied us.

The press screening was followed immediately by the press conference, where the audience had the opportunity to ask questions of the production team. Unusual for a director and a producer to do, Davies and Stewart stayed behind after the press conference concluded for individuals to approach them with specific questions. (Several of the Wharton attendees spoke one-on-one with Terence Davies.) My interview with him was to be the next day at his hotel; and, while I had spoken to Davies a few times on the telephone, I had never met him.

"Do you want to meet Terence Davies?" I asked Scott.

There were several people surrounding Davies, talking with him, and showing no reluctance to be doing so. Scott Marshall, though, was reluctant.

"Could I?" he modestly asked me.

Scott Marshall and Terence Davies met. Scott was genuinely surprised that Davies knew of his work at The Mount (from research Davies had done in the course of making *The House of Mirth*). The two spoke briefly, but warmly, about, among other matters, the possibility of The Mount acquiring Wharton's library.

If you know Scott, you know that he wrote me a thank you note. In return, I sent him a copy of the unpublished shooting script of *The House of Mirth* that Terence Davies had given me. E-mail exchanges followed: quick words, short electronic missives that found us both too overloaded to engage in the leisurely, Butler Pantry chatter that we both would have preferred.

I have been at the game of academics long enough to see that a depth of talent is common among our ranks, but so also is a shallowness of ego, a pettiness of response, and an intellectual posturing. The Scott I knew was rich in the former and poor in the latter. He displayed both a keen academic talent that was at once apparent and consistently excellent and a selfhood free of posturing, pettiness, and pride. He was sweet and good and funny, strikingly intellectual and joyously boyish. Scott Marshall will, and should, be missed. (*Dorme, mio piccino dolce.*)

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Edith Wharton Restoration, Inc., 1997.

Remembering Scott Marshall

Julie Olin-Ammentorp
LeMoyne College

I cannot say that I knew Scott very well; I cannot recall exactly when we met; I saw him perhaps six or eight times altogether between 1987—the earliest year I could have met him—and his death in the fall of 2002. And yet, each time we met, Scott always and immediately welcomed me like an old friend. For all his knowledge about Edith Wharton and *The Mount*, he was completely unpretentious, unreservedly friendly, and always of good cheer. He was one of those rare people who radiate warmth and friendliness.

And he was generous. At the end of a talk, both learned and entertaining, which he gave on Wharton and photography at a conference at *The Mount*, I was waiting to greet him when a dealer in rare books and magazines, apparently an old friend of Scott's, wrapped up her chat with him by presenting him a copy of an October 1915 *Scribner's Magazine*, an issue in which Wharton had originally published one of the articles which would later be collected in her volume, *Fighting France*. As Scott and I chatted I could not resist commenting on the magazine he had just been given. With characteristic generosity he immediately asked if I would like to borrow it. I was surprised and pleased, but also pressed him to make sure this was really all right with him; I think I had a deep feeling that, had someone just presented me with such a gem, I would be unlikely to want to part with it, even temporarily, so soon. But the offer was, of course, genuine, and of course I took him up on it; I had been researching Wharton's war-related writing and found the opportunity irresistible.

The Wharton conference was excellent; *The Mount* was lovely; if memory serves, even the weather cooperated. But my most vivid memory from that conference is sitting up late that night and reading "In Lorraine and the Vosges" in the form and format in which it had originally appeared—followed by other essays in that same issue, like "General Joffre: The Victor of the Marne" and "On the British Battle Line." The time with that generously-loaned *Scribner's* changed the way I thought about the war Wharton had lived through in France; it gave me a sense of the war not as history, something completed and recorded, but as a present through which Wharton and so many, many others lived, wondering day to

day what the outcome would be. Speaking in terms of mere fact, I could say that Scott loaned me a magazine for an evening, which is, perhaps, nothing very remarkable; but it would be far truer to say that his impulsive generosity gave me an unexpected and irreplaceable gift of time and insight.

Wharton lost a number of friends during the war, among them Jean du Breuil de Saint-Germain. A passage from her eulogy for him seems to suit Scott as well:

We saw each other quite rarely—we always got along! . . .

Each time we met, I felt this current of reciprocal understanding

He took such a lively interest in others' ideas, and not only in their ideas but in their ways of feeling, of envisioning life, and all its joys and all its sadnesses, that in meeting with him again, even after a long absence, one never lost a moment in the exchange of empty and useless words. (*Uncollected Critical Writings* 197)¹

These words seem to me to state with almost uncanny accuracy who Scott was and what he meant to me and, I suspect, to many besides me. He was an excellent scholar: his work on films based on Wharton's fiction has become a standard reference; his knowledge of Wharton was wide and deep—and lively as well. For myself and others, he was our link to *The Mount*; it is a place I associate almost as strongly with him as I do with Edith Wharton. When I next visit it, I will feel Scott's absence—the absence of his good cheer, his warmth, and his spontaneous generosity.

Notes

¹ Wharton's eulogy appeared in French in the *Revue Hebdomadaire*, 15 May 1915. I am using the translation provided in *Edith Wharton: The Uncollected Critical Writings*.

Edith Wharton's War Elegies¹

Julie Olin-Ammentorp
LeMoyne College

It is a critical commonplace to say that Edith Wharton, who had published a number of majors novels before World War I, slowed her literary production during the war years.² To some extent this is true; from 1901 until 1913 she published at least one book every year³, including an impressive array of works just before the war: *Ethan Frome* in 1911, *The Reef* in 1912, and *The Custom of the Country* in 1913.

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Significantly, 1914—the first year of the war—was one of the few years from 1901 on in which Wharton did not publish a book. The interruption in Wharton's rate of publication is hardly surprising; as her biographers R.W. B. Lewis, Shari Benstock, and Alan Price have made clear, Wharton devoted herself to administering and fund-raising for a number of important charities during the war, and the energy she put into these endeavors inevitably diverted some of the energy she would otherwise have put into writing. Nevertheless, she remained very active as an author during the war years, though she frequently worked in genres other than fiction. As a detailed look at her serial publications during the war years indicates,⁴ she published a great many newspaper and magazine articles; some of the latter were later collected in *Fighting France* and *French Ways and Their Meaning*.

Wharton also published a number of poems during the war years. Some of these were occasional poems; for instance, a brief poem, entitled simply "Belgium," was prompted by her admiration of the Belgian spirit after the German army invaded it in August 1914 and was included in *King Albert's Book: A Tribute to the Belgian King and People from Representative Men and Women Throughout the World*, an anthology of works by famous authors. Wharton wrote another poem, "The Tryst," about a Belgian refugee woman whose home and family have been destroyed by the Germans, and she included this in the anthology she edited as a fund-raiser for her own charities, *The Book of the Homeless* (1916). The war years caused her, like so many others, not just outrage about the international situation but also deep personal grief—grief she would articulate through a number of elegies.

On August 11, 1914, eleven days after the mobilization of France, Edith Wharton had written to Bernard Berenson, "It is all thrillingly interesting, but very sad to see one's friends going to the slaughter" (*Letters* 333). Wharton's tone here, particularly her use of the stock phrase "going to the slaughter," may well strike readers today as callous or harsh; yet it reflects the fact that this letter was written only a few days after the war's beginning, a period in which enthusiasm for the war ran high. Wharton's "interest" in the war was soon interwoven with sorrow.

Three deaths in 1915 led Wharton from a general sense of the war's human costs to a deeper and more personal sense of loss. The earliest blow was the death of Jean du Breuil de Saint-Germain, a young friend who had accompanied Wharton on a trip to Spain in 1912 (Benstock 263). In a eulogy for him published in the *Revue Hebdomadaire*, Wharton

described him enthusiastically as a man both sympathetic and intellectual, as someone deeply interested in both art and social justice. His death, rather than leading her to question the war, however, as it might have for some others, only confirmed her belief in the power of war to confer glory on its participants—and particularly on its victims. In her eulogy she concluded that Jean du Breuil "had the 'good fortune' to die for his country, on a morning already lit by the next French victory . . . [L]isten to this description of his death and tell me if he had not accomplished all" (*Uncollected Critical Writings* 203). Wharton then quotes an account of du Breuil's death: "He took a bullet in the heart and another under the shoulder-blade" as he was attempting "to look for one of his wounded men close to the Germans" (*Uncollected Critical Writings* 203). Such a death in action fit the heroic mold of soldiery that existed before the Great War and to which many still adhered. In a letter to Wharton, Henry James's response to her report of du Breuil's death confirms her sense of his heroism: "Your account of the admirable manner of his end makes one feel that one would like even to have just beheld him" (Powers 331).

Wharton's sorrow for du Breuil's death elicited her first war-related elegy. Apparently never published, the poem exists in typescript. It is entitled simply "Beaumont, February 23rd, 1915"—the place and date of Jean du Breuil's death;⁵ beneath this typed title is his name, written in Wharton's hand. The poem begins with the grim notion of burial: "So much of life was sudden thrust / Under this dumb disfiguring dust[.]" The first stanza, however, quickly turns to commemorating the mental energy and intellectual scope of her friend:

Such ardour for things deep and great,
Such easy disregard of fate,
Such memories of strange lands remote,
Of solitudes where eagles float . . .

The second, shorter stanza recounts obliquely yet clearly what du Breuil meant to Wharton herself:

All this – and then his voice, his eyes,
His eager questions, gay replies,
The warmth he put into the air –
And, oh, his step upon the stair!

These lines both recall Wharton's joy at hearing "his step upon the stair" and tacitly acknowledge that she will never again experience that particular joy. The poem returns to its initial focus on du Breuil's burial—now on the grave itself—only to pity that grave for its inability to "Efface the sense of what he was[.]" Wharton writes,

Poor grave!—for he shall burst your ties,

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And come to us with shining eyes,
And laughter, and a quiet jest,
Whenever we, who loved him best,
Speak of great actions simply done,
And lives not vain beneath the sun.
(Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University,
Bloomington, Indiana)

"Beaumez" established the pattern that Wharton would follow in later elegies as well: an expression of grief and loss, followed by an assertion of the power to keep the dead alive through memory. In "Beaumez" such recollections are not individual, but collective ("whenever we . . . / Speak of great actions simply done," emphasis added). Moreover, spoken memories of Jean du Breuil would, Wharton implies, not only revive her fallen friend but reaffirm the cause in which he died. A kind of glory shines around Jean du Breuil and his "great actions simply done."

At the foot of the manuscript of this poem are typed Wharton's name and the date, "Easter. 1915." While the poem does not suggest du Breuil as a Christ figure, it would be impossible not to see overtones of Christ's resurrection in Wharton's declaration, "Poor gravel—for he shall burst your ties[.]" Appropriately for an Easter poem, "Beaumez" ends on that triumphant note of resurrection. Grief itself is buried as Wharton asserts the power of memory to resurrect the dead; the poem's final line ends not on "deaths not vain," as it well might have done, but rather on "lives not vain." Later elegies, though they would also ascribe a crucial role to memory, would be less triumphant in tone.

Indeed, Wharton's expressions of grief became less triumphant and more pained as 1915 continued. In June of that year her friend and translator Robert d'Humières died in the war; her former footman Henri was killed in September. At the time of Jean du Breuil's death, Wharton's adherence to the notion of the glory of war exceeded that expressed by du Breuil's own commanding officer, the Comte de Séguier. In a letter to Wharton he stated that "My sadness, I confess, remains indifferent to what is called the glory of his dying. His personality alone was in my eyes sufficient to crown him with glory"; du Breuil's death made him aware of his own unrealistic optimism: "I stupidly thought, if you can imagine, that he would be spared, and that all these brutalities unleashed by civilization and human progress would treat him gently" (Powers 393). Although the deaths of Robert d'Humières and Henri did not affect Wharton's belief in the importance of the war, her response to them was simpler and more personal. After Henri's death she wrote to Bernard Berenson,

Just a line to tell you that our poor little Henri
was killed on the 30th. One of his friends has just

brought us the news, & all my servants are
crying their eyes out. Oh, this long horror! It
comes home with a special pang when an
obscure soldier drops out of the lines, & one
happens to know what an eager spirit beat in
him (*Letters* 361).

Wharton's sense of the war as a stirring and noble conflict persisted, but it was accompanied by a growing understanding that, if the war had to be fought to save France and even civilization, it would inevitably bring loss and sorrow in its wake.

In 1918 Wharton found herself writing another elegy, one for Ronald Simmons. This young American had studied in Paris, become Wharton's friend, and worked with her extensively on charitable projects during the earlier years of the war.⁶ Her grief for him was profound. Her letter to Berenson reporting his death is uncharacteristically fragmented, reflecting her agitation; in it she remarks, "This breaks me down to the depths. I really loved him dearly—& he had a great sort of younger brotherly affection for me—" (*Letters* 409). Her final sentence in the letter is "J'ai le coeur meurtri" [my heart is broken] (*Letters* 409). She would dedicate both her 1918 novel, *The Marne*, and her 1923 novel, *A Son at the Front*, to his memory.

Wharton's elegy for him, "'On Active Service': American Expeditionary Force (R.S., August 12th, 1918)," was published by *Scribner's Magazine* in November 1918. In it Wharton expresses a mixture of stances and emotions: shock, loyal affection, refusal to be mollified by stock sentiments, and—as in "Beaumez," her elegy for Jean du Breuil—belief in an afterlife created in human memory. She begins with a conundrum, a statement of fact paired with the inability to accept it: "He is dead that was alive. / How shall friendship understand?" The poem thus opens with bald statement; later lines reverberate with the tones of chivalry: "He, with so much left to do, / Such a gallant race to run. . . ." Such diction, as Paul Fussell has established, generally accompanied a belief in God's divine governance—and became outmoded as the war dragged on and soldiers suffered high losses and, along with many civilians, lost faith in concepts like the nobility of sacrifice.⁷ But far from presenting the war as under God's guidance, as one might expect from Wharton's diction in these lines, she presents God as inscrutable: "What concern had he with you, / Silent Keeper of things done?" Similarly, she refuses facile visions of an afterlife: "Tell us not that, wise and young, / Elsewhere he lives out his plan." Yet she concludes by describing a hopeful Elysium in human memory:

Long and long shall we remember,
In our breasts his grave be made.

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It shall never be December
Where so warm a heart is laid,
But in our saddest selves a sweet voice sing,
Recalling him, and Spring.

Despite its grief and bafflement, the poem ends on a note of hope.

Although this poem is an elegy for Simmons, Wharton does not emphasize it as such. Her title ("On Active Service": American Expeditionary Force) emphasizes the entire American military contingent; only under this title are Simmons's initials and the date of his death. Wharton saw her public expression of grief as representative: her poem speaks for others as well as for herself, and of others as well as of Simmons. Similarly, the poem makes no mention of the circumstances of Simmons's death, a hospital death caused by double pneumonia. His loss was as sad as any other, but it was not (unlike that of Jean du Breuil) one that lent itself to descriptions of wartime heroism. Wharton's 1915 words about Henri's death reverberate in this poem. The "long horror" returned with Simmons's death; he, like Henri, was unlikely to go down in the annals of history, yet, like Henri, he possessed "an eager spirit," and his death caused Wharton a "special pang." Amidst the strong pro-French expressions Wharton was also penning in 1918—*The Marne and French Ways and Their Meaning*—stands this quiet, questioning, but ultimately reassuring, elegy, a harbinger of the two elegies she would write in 1919.

Scholars of Great War literature have noted that one of the immediate post-war impulses was to create monuments to the dead. In some cases these monuments were physical: cenotaphs and well-arranged cemeteries created a sense of order out of the chaos of the war. In other cases they were verbal: voluminous official histories of the Great War proliferated in its wake (Hynes 278). Such monuments, as Samuel Hynes has written, "affirmed . . . that it was a good war, a just war, a great war. . . . The stories have their dark moments and their tragic losses, but they swell with emotion and pride at the end, and the Big Words"—capitalized abstractions like Honor and Glory—"sound out again, as though they had never been doubted" (278). "[S]well[ing] with emotion and pride" was certainly Wharton's reaction as she heard the bells pealing the end of the war in Paris: "We had fared so long on the thin diet of hope deferred[,] she wrote, "that for a moment or two our hearts wavered and doubted. Then, like the bells, they swelled to bursting, and we knew the war was over" (*Backward Glance* 360). The swelling "emotion and pride" expressed themselves in one of her first post-war works, the poem "You and You."

Wharton wrote to her sister-in-law Minnie Jones in November 1918 that she had composed "a piece I think fairly good in a 'popular' way. . . . [T]he splendid fighting of our soldiers . . . wrung it out of me suddenly a few days ago" (29 Nov. 1918, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library)—surely the poem "You and You," which was published in the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph* in January 1919. Moving with a strong martial rhythm, the poem addresses American soldiers, reflecting both its author's admiration of them and her sense of the cost of the war:

Every one of you won the war—
You and you and you—
Pressing and pouring forth, more and more,
Tolling and straining from shore to shore
To reach the flaming edge of the dark
Where man in his millions went up like a spark;
.....
And now, when the last of them all are by,
Be the Gates lifted up on high,
To let those Others in,
Those Others, their brothers, that softly tread,
That come so thick, yet take no ground,
That are so many, yet make no sound.
Our Dead, our Dead, our Dead!

O silent and secretly-moving throng,
In your fifty thousand strong,
Coming at dusk when the wreaths have dropt,
And streets are empty, and music stopt,
Silently coming to hearts that wait
Dumb in the door and dumb at the gate,
And hear your step and fly to your call—
Every one of you won the war,
But you, you Dead, most of all!

With its enthusiasm for the soldiers and its assumption that the war was worth fighting and dying in, the poem is one of the verbal monuments that both memorialized and justified the war. Further, it restores glory to a war that had sunk from idealism into horror. The "Big Words" are here, announced by capital letters, not only for "the Dead," but for everything associated with them: "Where's the Arch high enough, / Lads, to receive you"; "Lift up the Gates for these that are last, / That are last in the great Procession [.]"

Wharton's elegy for Ronald Simmons opens with a conundrum ("He is dead that was alive. / How shall friendship understand?"); "You and You" relies on a similar trope, paradox. After the procession of returning soldiers, Wharton writes, will come another procession of "Those Others, their brothers, that softly tread, / That come so thick, yet take no ground, / That

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are so many, yet make no sound." The dead are both absent and present, both sorely missed and eagerly reclaimed. In a further paradox implied by the poem, the dead are both victims of the war and victors over it: "Every one of you won the war, / But you, you Dead, most of all!" Like "'On Active Service'" and her elegy for Jean du Breuil, "You and You" both mourns the dead and asserts their afterlife among those who loved them best. And like both those earlier poems, this one is a monument, reasserting the value of the war. Although the loss is great and deep, there is no fundamental questioning here, no challenging the necessity of the war itself: the Dead died victorious in a worthy cause and are rewarded not only with written public tributes, but with a significant afterlife in the memories of those who loved them.

Wharton devoted her energies to one more war-related poem, entitled simply "Elegy," which differs markedly from the elegies which preceded it. As we have seen, Wharton's earlier elegies, even while acknowledging the deaths caused by the war, confirm the importance of the war. "You and You" stresses noble abstractions and praises the soldiers for their sacrifice: "Everyone one of you won the war, / But you, you Dead, most of all!" "'On Active Service'" concludes with the reassurance that "a sweet voice" will "sing" in the hearts of the grieving, "Recalling him [the dead], and Spring"; similarly, "Beaumont" reassures its readers that "he shall burst" the grave's limits, "And come to us with shining eyes."

Such reassurances are missing from "Elegy." First published in Wharton's 1926 volume *Twelve Poems*, the poem is preceded by a full page listing its title and—in brackets below it—the date 1918, suggesting that the poem was written in that year. If so, it must surely have been after, or close to, the war's end—and, in all likelihood, after the loss of Wharton's young aviator cousin, Newbold Rhineland, who had been shot down in an air battle (see Benstock 342). Wharton received news in early October 1918 that he was missing; she wrote quickly to "Bo's" father, her cousin Tom Rhineland, urging him and his wife to maintain hope that Newbold had survived the crash—though the young man was eventually pronounced dead. Newbold, along with Ronald Simmons, Henri, Robert d'Humières, Jean du Breuil, and the countless others who died in the war, was surely in Wharton's thoughts as she wrote her tribute to "the young dead."

The poem begins with a brief reminder of the sacrifice of the young soldiers who have died: "Ah, how I pity the young dead who gave / All that they were, and might become, that we / With tired eyes should watch this perfect sea[.]" The soldiers' sacrifice is stated simply and without romantic flourish in these

lines. Further, these lines convey the speaker's appreciation that the "young dead" gave up their lives for her and those like her. The "tired eyes" suggest the fatigue of the war years and, further, hint at an unanswerable question: Why should the young and energetic have sacrificed themselves for the older and less vital? The poem moves from this briefly-stated sense of sacrifice toward the speaker's haunted sense that the very landscape, with its plants and flowers, will remind her perpetually of those who died:

No more shall any rose along the way,
The myrtled way that wanders to the shore,
Nor jonquil-twinkling meadow any more,
Nor the warm lavender that takes the spray,
Smell only of the sea-salt and the sun,

But, through recurring seasons, every one
Shall speak to us with lips the darkness closes,
Shall look at us with eyes that missed the roses,
Clutch us with hands whose work was just
begun . . .

Wharton's love of landscape and gardening is reflected in her naming of specific flowering plants—the rose, the jonquil, and so on; her sense of the magnitude of the lives lost in the war is reflected in her prediction that all of these plants will become anthropomorphized reminders of those losses, "speak [ing]" and "look[ing]" with the eyes of the dead, and—alarmingly—even "Clutch[ing] us with hands whose work was just begun[.]"

Finally, Wharton emphasizes loss, the loss of the "young dead" themselves who will never know again the beauties, and indeed the perfection, of the natural world:

Ah, how I pity the young dead, whose eyes
Strain through the sod to see these perfect
skies,
Who feel the new wheat springing in their
stead,

And the lark singing for them overhead!

In this poem Wharton does not suggest the victory of the dead, nor their ongoing existence in the memory of those who love them. She suggests their repose beneath "the sod," but implies that rather than "resting in peace," the dead maintain a certain residual consciousness—just enough consciousness to know what they have lost. Similarly, they retain just enough energy to "Strain" their eyes "through the sod to see these perfect skies," to envy "the new wheat springing in their stead," and to "feel the lark singing for them overhead!" In its final lines the poem may echo Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," in which the speaker declares, listening to the bird's song, "Now more than ever seems it rich to die"—only to realize a few lines later that,

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should he die, "Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain— / To thy high requiem become a sod." The lark in Wharton's "Elegy" may offer a memorial song—it sings, after all, for "the young dead." But the emphasis in the last three lines of "Elegy" is not on the nobility of sacrifice nor on the afterlife of the dead in the memory of those who loved them, but on all that the dead have lost and which they can never regain. Their eyes may "[s]train . . . to see these perfect skies," but to no avail; the "new wheat" is "springing in their stead," and the dead feel, not hear, "the lark singing for them overhead!" In this poem, Wharton is acutely aware of the perfection of the natural world; her accumulation of details implies how highly she prizes it, and, consequently, how greatly she ranks the loss of those who could no longer experience it. "Elegy" is a sad and somber poem—not one that a reader of Wharton's earlier war elegies could have foreseen.

Wharton's decision to write poems about these deaths is in itself worth pondering. Though a prolific writer of novels and short stories, she wrote relatively few poems and published fewer; her only volumes of poetry are *Artemis to Actaeon and Other Verse*, published in 1909, and *Twelve Poems*, published in 1926. Both books were printed in small editions: *Artemis to Actaeon* originally in 250 copies (Garrison 128) and *Twelve Poems* in 130 copies (Garrison 314). These small printings suggest that neither Wharton nor her publishers expected her poetry to sell particularly well. For Wharton, the choice to write a poem seems to have been generated not by any narrative impulse or financial motive, but by the desire to express her own deepest emotions through the lyric formality of verse.⁸ On the occasions of the deaths of both Jean du Breuil and Ronald Simmons, she composed prose eulogies as well as poetic elegies; the eulogies, while full of affection, are more factual, public documents, clearly designed to inform the public about the deceased, while her elegies express her sense of loss.⁹ Indeed, the mere existence of poetic elegies for these young men suggests the depth of her grief for them and the tragedy of their untimely deaths. Edith Wharton had traveled a long and sorrowful way from August 1914, in which she had called the war "thrillingly interesting" and written almost callously—certainly thoughtlessly—of "see[ing] one's friends going to the slaughter." She now understood—as did so many others—the tragic losses of the war years.

Notes

¹ This essay is excerpted and adapted from my book, *Edith Wharton's Writings from the Great War*, forthcoming later in 2004 from University Press of Florida, and reprinted with permission from the University Press of Florida. Full texts of the elegies discussed here, plus additional examples of Wharton's war-related poetry and prose, will be included in appendices in this book. Quotations from "Beaumont, Feb. 23rd, 1915" are used courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University, and permission of the Watkins/Loomis Agency; "Elegy" is quoted with permission of the Watkins/Loomis Agency.

² On the war's effect on Wharton's writing, see Shari Benstock, *No Gifts from Chance*, Chapter 7, and R.W.B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, Chapter 20. In particular, the war interrupted her composition of the novel *Literature* (Benstock 313, Lewis 393-396), which she never completed. Both Benstock's and Lewis's biographies give excellent accounts of Wharton's life and activities during the war; for the most detailed account, see Alan Price, *The End of the Age of Innocence: Edith Wharton and the First World War*.

³ One exception is 1906, when she did not publish a book. In 1902, 1904, 1905, 1907, and 1908 she published two books, frequently in different genres (e.g. a novel and a translation, as in 1902, or a collection of short stories and a travel book, as in 1908).

⁴ For a listing of Wharton's serial publications during the war, see Stephen Garrison, *Edith Wharton: A Descriptive Bibliography*, especially 453-459. From November 1914 through November 1918, the month of the Armistice, she published thirty-seven items, almost all related to the war; she continued publishing war-related items into 1919 (and, of course, after, with her novel *A Son at the Front* coming out in 1923).

⁵ In his notes on the eulogy, Wegener gives the date of du Breuil's death as Feb. 22 (*Uncollected Critical Writings* 204). I have been unable to reconcile this discrepancy.

⁶ For the most detailed account of Wharton's friendship with Ronald Simmons, see Frederick Wegener, "Edith Wharton and Ronald Simmons: Documenting a Pivotal Wartime Friendship." The article also includes a photograph of Simmons and the texts of Wharton's elegy and prose eulogy for him.

⁷ See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*; on the change the war wrought in poetic diction, see especially Chapter 1.

⁸ E. K. Brown also took this view of Wharton's choice of poetry over prose. Comparing Wharton's fictional and poetic treatment of a single issue—in this case, a woman's sense that the man she loved best always secretly preferred another woman to her—he notes of

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her poem "The First Year," "this time the subject asserts itself with such emotional force that prose would not have been a sufficient means of expression" (219). As is now well documented, she also used poetry to record many of the deep emotions aroused by her affair with Morton Fullerton; these, of course, were poems she would never have considered publishing.

⁹ Her eulogy for Jean du Breuil is translated into English and included in *Edith Wharton The Uncollected Critical Writings*, ed. Frederick Wegener, 197-204; her briefer tribute to Ronald Simmons is included in Wegener's "Edith Wharton and Ronald Simmons: Documenting a Pivotal Wartime Friendship," 85.

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Taming the Transgressive: A Feminist Analysis of the Film Adaptation of "The Old Maid"

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In her book, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Marilyn Frye insightfully describes the nature of oppression as it relates to feminist theory:

The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systemically related to each other in such a way as to catch one between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction (4).

Her notion of unavoidable confinement in unworkable roles is beautifully and tragically illustrated in Edith Wharton's "The Old Maid." In this novella, Delia Ralston and Charlotte Lovell both embody the human cost of women's oppression as they are forced to sacrifice their own dreams and desires in favor of the feminine roles to which they are confined by the strict codes of Old New York.

In Wharton's novella, the story of Delia and Charlotte demonstrates how women's destinies are largely determined by their birth into a suffocatingly conventional society that ascribes little value to women outside the context of marriage. Delia has married Jim Ralston, a member of a prestigious and domineering New York family, but by making this good marriage, she gave up any chance of uniting with her true love, Clem Spender. At the beginning of the novella, Delia's cousin Charlotte, who is promised to Jim's cousin Joe Ralston, reveals to Delia that she gave birth to Clem Spender's child, Tina. Unable to claim the illegitimate child as her own, Charlotte has disguised her motherhood by opening an orphanage and caring for Tina among the orphans. When Delia learns of Charlotte's transgression, she foils the marriage by telling Joe Ralston that Charlotte cannot marry because of her lung disease. Charlotte spends the rest of her life unmarried, becoming an old maid who acts strict and sullen to her own daughter in order to hide her true identity as mother. Delia becomes the one

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whom Tina calls "Mummy" and the one who takes on the role of adoring mother to Tina. In order to secure a good marriage for Tina, Charlotte even consents to letting Delia adopt Tina.

"The Old Maid" emphasizes how the women's lives are stifled by their immersion in a society that scorns independent thought, unconventionality, and women who do not marry. Both women are pressured by society into roles that do not quite fit them. Delia is pressured to marry a man she does not love, lest she lose the chance of marrying altogether and become a social pariah, an old maid. Charlotte is prevented from marrying by Delia's conservatism, and then, for fear of damaging Tina's social and financial future, must deny herself the experience of a close and loving relationship with her own daughter while watching that very same relationship emerge between Tina and Delia. The critique of the oppressive institutions of marriage and family circulates throughout the story and forms the basis of Wharton's feminist sensibilities.

This novella and its pervasive feminist sensibilities were greatly altered when the theatrical and film adaptations were produced. The film adaptation of "The Old Maid," written by Casey Robinson and directed by Edmund Goulding, starred two prominent actresses: Miriam Hopkins as Delia and Bette Davis as Charlotte. The film was based on Zoë Akins' 1922 Pulitzer Prize winning adaptation, and it reproduced many of the play's alterations while enacting many of its own. While Wharton firmly situates the causes for the women's lack of fulfillment within the larger social forces, the resulting play and film do not. This article will explore how the film enacts changes in characterization, structure, and tone that erode the feminist thought that circulates through the novella.

I will argue that the film oversimplifies Delia's character, naturalizes the performance of gendered roles, and obscures the social critique. I believe that the key to creating a feminist adaptation of Wharton's novella would be to infuse the narration more fully into the structure and aesthetics of the film. It is the narrative language that is so subversive in the novella, and it is the excising of this language that produces a film which fails to subvert. As I analyze how the film cuts out this language, I will reimagine ways in which the film may have preserved Wharton's narration while also adjusting to the new medium.

A feminist adaptation should at the very least effectively translate the feminist sensibilities present in the original text to a new medium. In order to accomplish this, the adaptation should take care to retain the complexity and centrality of the female

character's subjectivity, especially her point of view. Jeanie Forte defines female subjectivity as a "feminist frame of reference that can provide a context for articulating one's experience of the world, one's desire" (38). Subjectivity is a point of intersection between individual experience and culture's inscription on an individual. In Wharton's fiction, as in that of many feminist writers, her subversion emerges from how the characters experience themselves and their world more often than from what the characters do and say. In a society as rigid and scripted as Wharton's Old New York, the power of feminism was often within the unspoken and internalized. This poses a significant challenge to adapters, directors, and actors: how can they effectively reveal a character's subjectivity and point of view in a medium that tends to objectify?

In order to demonstrate the importance of adapting a character's point of view, I will examine Delia's transformation from page to screen. In Wharton's text, Delia's innermost thoughts contain many of the feminist sensibilities, one of which is her sense of alienation from her own gendered role as wife and mother. Catherine MacKinnon states: "Feminism locates the relation of woman's consciousness to her life situation in the relation of two moments: being shaped in the image of one's oppression, yet struggling against it" (102). Delia embodies this internal struggle as she alternates between fully and gratefully embracing her wifely identity and questioning the institution of marriage altogether. Here, she muses about the usualness of her marriage to Jim Ralston:

...but the soundness, safeness, suitability of the arrangement, did make it typical of the kind of alliance which a nice girl in the nicest set would serenely and blushing forecast for herself.

Yes--and afterward?

Well--what? And what did this new question mean? Afterward: why of course, there was the startled puzzled surrender to the incomprehensible exigencies of the young man to whom one had at most yielded a rosy cheek in return for an engagement ring; there was the large double-bed; the terror of seeing him shaving calmly the next morning, in his shirt sleeves, through the dressing room door; the evasions, insinuation, resigned smiles and Bible texts of one's Mamma; the reminder of the phrase "to obey" in the glittering blur of the Marriage Service. (82)

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Though Delia outwardly appears to blindly accept her station, Wharton's omniscient narrator reveals that she does question the institutions of marriage and motherhood. While she never acts upon this internal interrogation in deed or dialogue, it is clear from the above passage that she feels alienated not only from her husband but also from herself, specifically from her role as wife. Wharton's use of a third person omniscient narrator to convey Delia's thoughts skillfully heightens the sense of alienation through the distant narrative perspective. She even writes this literary construction into Delia's thoughts: "Some deep central indifference had gradually made her regard herself as a third person, living the life meant for another woman" (141). Delia is detached from her true self because she has internalized society's mores, but she simultaneously desires escape from them—she is a woman divided, but one that keeps the conflicted part of her identity silent, hidden, and secret.

Throughout the novella, Delia wrestles with the nature of her own identity, which is imperfectly formed both within and outside of the Ralston identity. In the beginning, Delia is a Ralston who is new at being a Ralston, a Ralston who is learning to play her part. When she decides to adopt Tina near the end (an unconventional action), Dr. Lanskell calls her Delia Lovell, signifying that she is acting out of a part of herself that is not yet infused with the Ralston identity. In considering the adoption, Delia realizes that she may have given up her own identity; she even recognizes that the Ralston language has infiltrated her thoughts: "There seemed to be so many more people to 'consider' now ('consider' was the Ralston word)...What would the Halseys say, and what the Ralstons? Had she then become a Ralston through and through?" (148). Wharton links Delia's questioning nature to her ability to disentangle her own perspective from that of the overpowering Ralstons: "That secret questioning which sometimes beat in her like wings, would now and then so divide her from them [the Ralstons] that for a fleeting moment she could survey them in relation to other things" (81). The imagery of a heart as a caged bird is especially apt for Delia, who had to sacrifice her desire (Clem Spender) in order to fit into society's rigid expectations for women (Jim Ralston) and the protection they offer. It is during these moments of alienation that Delia is able to demystify the patriarchal ideology, embodied by the Ralston family, which binds her to her traditional roles. Even in her silence, Delia's inner thoughts function as a kind of resistance to her being completely subsumed into the Ralston identity.

In contrast, the film oversimplifies the characterization of Delia, eliminating her inner

questioning and depicting her as the ideal wife and mother. We cannot see the gaps between her inner self and her performance of self as we can in the novella. Instead, we see only the Delia that she presents to society—the competent, loving wife and mother. Furthermore, Delia is portrayed as a perfect embodiment of womanly virtues: subtle, domestic, maternal, girlish. By showing Delia happily fulfilling this role and glossing over her inner doubts, the character is changed from a covert critic of women's roles to a role model. For her fulfillment of these roles—bride, wife, mother, widow, Ralston—she is rewarded with adoration, especially the adoration of Tina and Dr. Lanskell. In contrast, Charlotte is merely tolerated by Tina, and Dr. Lanskell says of her, "No woman like that was ever easy to live with" (Robinson). Whereas the novella expresses that the roles for both women are inadequate, the film only foregrounds the limitation of Charlotte's role, portraying Delia as the heroine and giving the impression that Charlotte's unhappy fate was the product of personal weakness rather than social causes. Thus, the film reinterprets and reinvents the story as a cautionary tale, one that warns against the perils of unmarried women.

To be fair to the adapters, it is difficult to translate Wharton's omniscient narrator into film, as Delia would probably never have spoken her doubts aloud. She is only half aware of them herself in the novella, but it is this internal doubt that betrays a burgeoning feminist consciousness, a malfunction with the fit of Delia's outwardly perfect conventionality. And it is this problem that forms a central question of how to retain Wharton's feminism in the adaptation: how is it possible to show the complexity of a character on film when we can only see the external manifestations of inner life? The nature of the actress is to know the inner life and communicate it to the audience. However, the audience is only able to observe the interpretation, one that is often more communicative about emotion than complex inner thoughts. We see that a character is sad and we can surmise what she might be sad about, but we cannot know the thoughts of a character directly, except in rare usage of voice-over. Because Wharton's feminism is embedded in how Delia sees the world, a feminist adaptation of her work must more fully articulate Delia's subjectivity.

Bruce Kawin's concept of mindscreen provides a possible strategy for retaining and exploring Delia's complex and contradictory inner life in the film. Kawin defines mindscreen as the process of sharing the mind's eye of a character: "The audience sees what a narrator tells or invents or deliberately presents as his own experience...or what a character who is not in a

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deliberately narrating posture personally experiences as an imaginary reality, hallucination, thought, vision, or dream" (41). Mindscreen goes beyond objective reality into the realm of individualized subjective point of view. In other words, the audience sees what the character or narrator perceives, similar to impressionism.

Mindscreen could be used to show how Delia feels about her role as wife and mother. For example, the camera could show her perceptions of the marriage bed and her husband shaving by showing a close up shot that fills the whole screen, producing an impression that these objects overwhelm Delia. Mindscreen could also be used to show her alienation from her husband and children by including a shot that shows Delia separated from the children by a window pane and also separated from her husband by the frame of the doorway. Similarly, Delia could be shown to view her children and husband as far away from her through the use of long angle camera shots, and then, as her secret questioning ends, the camera shot could fade back into a more realistic objective view. To show how Delia is always operating within the constraints of her Ralston identity, the set of the Ralston house could feature oversized portraits that loom over her as she moves throughout her house. In this way, the film could use visual metaphors to represent the Ralston influence on Delia's thought processes, and mindscreen could more fully represent Delia's subjective experience, specifically her unspoken alienation and the way the Ralstons constrict her choices. I believe that these unspoken parts of Delia are central to producing a feminist adaptation.

While the film does not effectively show Delia's inner thoughts, it does succeed in depicting Charlotte's internal life. One particularly interesting technique of conveying Charlotte's subjectivity is the use of music. The playing of the song "Clementine" often accompanies scenes in which Charlotte is silently thinking, presumably indicating that she is thinking of Clem and perhaps of Tina, whose full name is Clementina after her father. In these scenes, music functions as a way to externalize Charlotte's internal thought. The melancholy tone of the song also works with Charlotte's facial expression to convey her emotional state to the audience. This usage of music to convey a character's internal thoughts could be employed in the case of Delia, effecting a kind of audio-mindscreen. While voice-over may be more specific, the use of music is less intrusive and still gives the audience a general idea of what the character is thinking.

Another instance that highlights Charlotte's point of view occurs when Charlotte watches Delia and Tina mount the stairs. At this point in the film, Charlotte has just consented to allow Delia to adopt Tina so as to give Tina the name and social backing she will need in order to be marriageable. Charlotte has sent Delia upstairs, saying, "Tell her tonight, she'll be glad to hear it" (Robinson). As Delia and Tina walk away from Charlotte, the point of view shot of the camera reveals the two figures enclosed in the frame of the door that Charlotte is looking through. As they mount the staircase, the figures become darker and then their shadows loom large as Charlotte watches, all the while the melancholy "Clementine" is playing. In the camera shot, Charlotte's head is in the left lower corner of the screen, dwarfed by the separate shadows of Delia and Tina that then merge into one shadow and finally disappear behind a door, shutting Charlotte out completely. After watching this scene, Charlotte whispers Tina's name tenderly, knowing that such tenderness can only be spoken in her daughter's absence. This scene is particularly adept in using visual metaphors to convey Charlotte's inner subjective experience of isolation and alienation. Using such techniques in respect to Delia's character would help to articulate her inner questioning, thereby retaining a primary vessel of Wharton's feminism.

In addition to fully exploring the complexity of the female characters, a feminist adaptation of the novella should retain Wharton's denaturalization of gender roles, especially the roles of wife, mother, and old maid. Through Delia's internal monologues, Wharton reveals that Delia is constructing herself in the image of what is expected of a wife and mother in a Ralston family. Delia is playing a role, a role that has been written for her by society and into which she has been cast by virtue of being female. She presents a smooth surface of conventional femininity to outside observers, but underneath that surface looms her questioning nature. For example, Delia outwardly dotes on her children, but inwardly feels occasional detachment from them. Along with the detachment comes a feeling of shame, because Delia knows a woman is not supposed to feel that way about her own children. Wharton reveals that Delia does not fit perfectly into the role of wife and mother as defined by society; rather, Delia constructs herself into her role by repressing the parts of herself that contradict her performance of the feminine ideal. By showing how Delia constructs her own identity, Wharton is problematizing oversimplified concepts of womanhood. Feminist scholar Judith Butler's

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perspective on gender resonates with Wharton's deconstructions of femininity: "Just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself" (146). A feminist adaptation of Wharton's characters should expose, not hide, the contradictions inherent in the performance of these gender roles.

The film focuses—more so than the novella—on the formation and evolution of Charlotte's old maid persona. In the novella, there is a jump in time, and Charlotte has already changed from her young self to an old maid. However, in the film we see Charlotte progress through various stages from being a young and impetuous girl to a strict and demure old woman. The film starts with both women dressed somewhat similarly, hair styled the same. Yet as Charlotte ages, Delia ages at what seems a much slower rate, such that at the end of the film Charlotte looks much older than Delia. The cuts of Charlotte's dresses are much narrower than Delia's, a sign of age and conservatism. Charlotte's dress color also turns from light to mixed light and dark to a stark black at the end of the film. The effect is that darkness is swallowing her up. She is made into a kind of sterile blank, an absence. The visual implication is that women who marry get to retain their youth, while those who don't wither and become socially invisible.

The fact that the old maid persona is a mask rather than a true identity for Charlotte is highlighted by one particular scene in the movie, a scene that was not present in the novella. As Charlotte waits for Tina to return from the dance, she rehearses two characters to present to Tina. First, Charlotte's face softens and she speaks affectionately to Tina, forgiving her tardiness and impropriety. Then her face hardens and she speaks sternly to Tina, scolding her for staying out so late and acting impetuously. With each persona, music is played in the background, further emphasizing the softness of the first and the discipline of the second. Instantly we see that this is what Charlotte does constantly in her own mind, translating her natural inclinations toward her daughter into distant and alienating textual controls. This scene works well to show that the old maid persona is a myth rather than a reality, a myth that Charlotte conveniently though painfully exploits in order to hide her maternal identity. In this way, the film does succeed in pointing out how femininity is performed in Charlotte's case.

But just as clearly as Charlotte is continually scripting her own role of old maid, Delia is also caught up in the script of her own social role in the novella.

Jessica Levine points out that "Delia, because she has always adhered to the strict Ralston ideas and codes without sacrificing her questioning spirit, is ideally suited to throw a veil over the situation and to be Charlotte's protector" (7). However, while the adherence to social scripts allows her to retain her questioning spirit, Delia constantly feels divorced from herself: "Ahead of her, she saw a future of duties and these she had gaily and faithfully accomplished. But her own life was over; she felt as detached as a cloistered nun" (141). There is a deep rift in Delia's seemingly joyful performance of wife. The film fails to communicate what the novella does so beautifully: Delia is also performing, though her performance is subtler and less extreme than Charlotte's. Instead, the film seals over Delia's contradictions and presents her as a woman who naturally fits into society's prescribed roles for women. Her only source of unhappiness appears to be the bother of living with Charlotte and her romantic pining for Clem Spender. Miriam Hopkins' performance of Delia is rather flat and giddy. From a feminist perspective, this oversimplification is especially problematic for an adaptation of a text that so carefully deconstructs Delia's seemingly perfect embodiment of femininity.

Wharton's feminism emerges from her explication of the causes and nature of this oppression. She is a keen reader of the society in which she lived, and because she is so highly attuned to the operations of this society, she is able to heighten the readers' sense of how the society's ideologies diminished the quality of life of her female characters. As Frye claims, the causes of oppression are systemic, not accidental or merely personal. Therefore, as a feminist adaptation depicts the character's oppression, it should take care to preserve the systemic nature of that oppression. Wharton clearly contextualizes the plight of Delia and Charlotte within the larger social institutions and ideologies that limit their choices. The tragedy of the novella is that both Delia and Charlotte are forced by society to sacrifice their own happiness—in succeeding in one area, they must sacrifice in another. Contrarily, the tragedy of the film is that Delia and Charlotte make the wrong choices and "accidentally" oppress each other.

In order to see how the film shifts the focus from social limitations to personal flaws, let's look at the scene where Delia achieves the salvation of Tina, while at the same time ruining Charlotte's chances for marriage. In the novella, her actions appear to be motivated by her desire to save Tina and the necessity of following Ralston protocol: "Whatever happened she could not let Charlotte Lovell marry Joe Ralston.

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All the traditions of honour and probity in which she had been brought up forbade her to connive at such a plan...The idea of Charlotte's marrying Joe Ralston--her own Jim's cousin--seemed to Delia as dishonourable as it would to any Ralston" (107). Delia is firmly entrapped by her own socialization and her own identity as a Ralston. She can allow herself to bend convention in order to save Tina, but not to break it entirely to allow for a marriage between Charlotte and Jim.

Although Delia's motivation for spoiling Charlotte's chance of marriage is not wholly magnanimous in the novella, the film obscures the social pressures that determine Delia's decision and heighten her jealousy. In the novella, Delia sees Charlotte coughing blood and uses the incident as an excuse to prevent Charlotte's marriage to Joe in order to secure a place for Tina. However, the film depicts Delia fabricating the lung disease instead of witnessing Charlotte coughing blood. In addition, she perseveres in preventing the marriage even after Joe has agreed to keep the orphanage, which would have spared both Tina and Charlotte. Thus, in the film Delia needlessly sabotages the marriage: a selfish act of revenge rather than one of social necessity. The causes for Delia's actions are divorced from her struggles with identity and social convention and resituated within her desire to punish Charlotte for "stealing" Clem. Just as Delia's inner conflict is minimized, her outer conflict with Charlotte is maximized to increase dramatic tension between the two women.

The dramatic tension comes to a climax in the scene where Charlotte confronts Delia about the undercurrent of hatred and jealousy that had heretofore remained unspoken. The film collapses several scenes into a single scene, but it does retain much of the original dialogue. In the film Delia admits her jealousy publicly to Charlotte, saying that "He [Clem] should have been mine, she should have been ours." However in the book, she makes no such admission and instead says "Upon my honour, I haven't thought of Clement Spender for years" (167). In fact, it is Charlotte who recognizes that "Clement Spender had never really belonged to her; now she perceived it was the same with Clement Spender's daughter" (170). Miriam Hopkins' portrayal of Delia is much less complex and more hysterical than her depiction by Wharton--she seems insanely jealous, chases after Charlotte, and has no internalized sense of her own wrongdoing. In contrast, as Delia looks at Charlotte in the novella, she realizes, "it was a terrible, sacrilegious thing to interfere with another's destiny, to lay the tenderest touch upon

any human being's right to love and suffer after his own fashion" (170). This contrasts with Hopkins' Delia, who claims that she knows she did the right thing when talking to Dr. Lanskill. Hopkins never really effectively communicates that Delia takes responsibility for her part in robbing Charlotte of her own happiness and her rightful role as Tina's mother.

Another structural change that causes the film to obscure the social critique is the deletion of Wharton's social history at the beginning of the novella. Wharton begins with a detailed history of Old New York, and her narrative voice both reports and critiques the society leading up to the lives of Delia and Charlotte. The narrator describes the Ralstons as: "Institutional to the core, they represented the conservative element that holds new societies together as seaplants bind the seashore" (5). This contextualization of Delia and Charlotte's drama is completely cut from the film, which begins with Delia's wedding. As McDowell points out, this exclusion detracts from Wharton's social critique: "Because the narrative voice in fiction is lost in drama and film, the satiric description of the historical and continuing nature of Gramercy Park society and its power over the individual is diminished in the dramatizations" (252). In fact, the film resituates the story within Philadelphia during the era of the Civil War, transforming Clem Spender from a starving artist into a war hero. This exclusion shifts the emphasis from Wharton's cultural critique of the society to the individual choices and psychological nature of the characters. Delia and Charlotte seem to have greater agency in the film than in the novella, because the oppressive context into which they are born is not explored visually or textually. Because the context is deemphasized, the women's faults and failures are disconnected from the social forces that contribute to their formation. The female characters appear to be caught not in a web of social forces, but in a web of their own making.

The film does gesture at retaining the presence of the social backdrop, primarily through the expansion of the characters of Mrs. Mingott and Dr. Lanskill. However, the two occasional and overly friendly characters cannot fully represent the totality of the repressive conventions that Wharton has woven throughout her novella. Their presence also decreases the focus on Delia and Charlotte. The addition of Mrs. Mingott and the increased role of the paternalistic doctor dilute the emphasis on the relationship of Delia and Charlotte. Dr. Lanskill is inserted into the film largely as a device for each woman to have a way to externalize her thoughts. However, he usurps many of the lines that the women think to themselves, so that

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what was once an internal struggle, resolved by the women themselves, becomes an external counseling session in which the doctor is portrayed as the paternalistic sage. While transforming the internally felt into the externally visible is certainly necessary in adaptation, the use of Dr. Lanskell is problematic to a faithful and feminist adaptation strategy. Dr. Lanskell's increased role also undercuts the self-sufficiency of the women, because he becomes a kind of surrogate father for Tina.

Wharton's theme of how the women are entrapped by society, metaphorically represented by the house, is minimized in the film because the house is depicted as vast and several scenes happen outside it. In the novella, the women's confinement to the house serves as a metaphor for their confinement to domestic gender roles. The struggle for the ownership of the small room next to Tina's is also a struggle to occupy the role of mother. The difficulty of changing oppressive society is best represented in Delia's inability to change the house: "Nothing had ever been changed in the room which, even as a bride, she had planned to modernize. All her dreams of renovation had faded long ago" (141). The opulent set of the film--complete with its *Gone With The Wind*-inspired sweeping staircase--undercuts the psychological claustrophobia of Wharton's novella. In addition, there are added scenes in a train station, on the battlefield, and in the courtyard outside of the house. Even within the house the characters are more mobile than they are in the novella, moving through several rooms for dialogue that the novella puts in a single setting. The convention of the film medium perhaps encouraged additional settings as a way to visually engage the audience. Nevertheless, these changes significantly altered the aesthetic and emotional realities of the original text. The style of the film conflicts with Wharton's tone, further undercutting her emphasis on society's constriction of the women's fates. I believe that keeping the film's action within the house would heighten both the dramatic tension and the feminist theme of the women's entrapment by external forces.

The greatest transformation of the tone occurs in the last scene of the film. In the novella, Delia asks Tina to be good to Aunt Charlotte on her wedding day and specifically to make sure she gives her last farewell kiss to Charlotte. There is no response by Tina--the very last line of the novella is Delia's request. It is important to note that the novella leaves Charlotte "alone behind the shut door of her own room, watching, struggling, listening" (172), completely shut out and holding what Delia imagines is a "tragic vigil" (172). In contrast, the film includes an exchange

between Charlotte and Tina, where Charlotte apologizes for being strict and, without revealing her position as mother, reveals her affection for Tina. This is followed by a longer dialogue in which Delia tells Tina that Charlotte has made great sacrifices for her sake and then, as in the novella, Delia requests that Tina give her last kiss to Aunt Charlotte. During the additional scene of Tina's departure from her wedding, she mounts her carriage and asks for her Aunt Charlotte. Charlotte, who is obviously surprised, goes up to Tina and receives her good-bye kiss. As Tina drives off, Charlotte waves good-bye, touching her face and smiling at the only sign of affection ever given by her child. Delia then approaches Charlotte, takes her hand, and the two women walk arm in arm back into the house as triumphant music swells. The tone of the ending is one of healing: the kiss received by Charlotte, together with Tina's departure, allows the women's relationship to be mended. Visually, they come together hand in hand, like two halves of one woman: the woman who loves Clem and the woman whom Clem loved, the biological and the psychological mother.¹ All is healed, solved and accounted for in the film, whereas the novella's ending is more ambiguous.

The uneasiness created by an ambiguous ending may be an important aspect of feminist fiction. It may stimulate the audience to wonder about the questions raised by the stories rather than accept the stories as closed entities that are neatly solved. In the adaptation of "The Old Maid," the unsettled ending is smoothed over for movie audiences, perhaps because film requires a fixed narrative outcome in order to be perceived as complete. Perhaps if the film were remade in the vision of a feminist adaptation, the ending would be less neatly tied up, less valorizing of self-sacrifice. Perhaps Delia's request of Tina would remain unanswered, and the complexity of the women's experience would be more aptly expressed by ending with a question, a hope for a small gesture: a gesture that will never be enough, but yet one that must suffice.

The film adaptation of "The Old Maid" tames the subversive elements of Wharton's feminist critique because it presents the plot of the story without fully engaging the themes and tone. The result is an interpretation of Wharton's work that conflates the surface of Delia with the identity of Delia, as well as transforming inner and social conflicts into conflicts between the women. Although I have critiqued the film's optimistic ending, I myself remain optimistic about the possibilities of the film medium for preserving and heightening the feminist messages of Wharton's novella. I believe that it is a tendency, not a certainty,

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for film to excise the narrative voice and thereby the feminist critique. By articulating Wharton's narrative voice through mindscreen and visual or textual metaphors, the possibilities emerge for an adaptation that promotes rather than obscures a feminist reading of Wharton's "The Old Maid." Using these techniques—and discovering new ones—can result in a more complex cinematic representation of female subjectivity, one that creates a space for both an understanding of and a struggle against the culture of women's oppression.

Notes

¹ The notion of biological and psychological mothers comes from Gloria Erlich, "The Female Conscience: Angel or Demon." *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*. Ed. Millicent Bell (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995) 101.

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Sexing the Lily: Shadows and Darkness in Terence Davies' *House of Mirth*¹

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Exquisitely framed by light, shadow, smoke, iron and concrete—we first meet Lily Bart as a rigorously feminine shape; her body has as much inarticulate power as the locomotive belching smoke beside her. This image and the film from which it is drawn are deeply feminist in their commitment—certainly we can say the film's feminism is less ambivalent than Wharton's own—a much-discussed topic among scholars and critics. What British director Terence Davies will require of us as the film progresses is that we directly identify with this female character, understand her plight, and unequivocally support her point of view. Her resistance becomes our resistance to the social pressures that confine us as we try to become who we are.

Terence Davies' screen adaptation of Edith Wharton's 1905 bestseller, *The House of Mirth*, uses shadow and darkness—the cinematic equivalent to Wharton's horrifyingly constricted social environment—to impart Wharton's depiction of the repressive world of old New York society at the turn of the century. This "visually sumptuous but cold to the touch" world novelized by Wharton and filmed by Davies, based on his own screenplay, chills us with its biting satire of "how the rich can punish others for being poor" (Winter 60; Lane 173). But what Davies captures better than the social drama around upper-class New Yorkers—Wharton's supreme forte—is the sexual drama around a woman who has beauty and social position but is financially insolvent. In part, one might attribute the differences in the story to the cinematic techniques used to translate the novel to film. But, as I argue, issues of adaptation do not fully account for the narrative choices Davies makes.² His job is bigger than simply bringing this story to the screen; he must find a way to translate this early 20th century drama about the social downfall of the twenty-nine-year-old Lily Bart into a story that matters to a twenty-first century audience.

But how does director Terence Davies manage to align the twenty-first century viewer with early twentieth century attitudes? Davies uses a focus on sex and sexuality as an analog to Wharton's social critique.³ And how does this film relate to his earlier work? Davies has made his mark on filmmaking through what some have called "confessional cinema"—focusing frequently, poignantly and most

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often painfully on episodes from his own past. Davies admits a personal affinity for Wharton's brilliant character, Lily Bart. "I suppose the thing that warmed me to Lily," Davies reflects, "is that I feel like an outsider" (Fuller 56). He connects his own experiences with those of Lily Bart—whose personal integrity ultimately wins out over her desire to fit in. Growing up in a poor neighborhood of Liverpool, Davies found himself ostracized as a schoolboy and soon realized that he was gay—a criminal offence in England until 1967. While Lily's conduct would never be called criminal, her actions are transgressive, and it is that quality in her that links her to Davies.

Davies makes Lily's sexuality the transgressive element in his film—her sexual desire becomes the major stumbling block to Lily's successful completion of her mission: to marry and marry well. Just as Martin Scorsese used smoldering embers to alert viewers to rising passion in his film adaptation of *The Age of Innocence*, Davies relies on smoke and smoking as a visual clue. Davies admits that he "genuinely doesn't understand the modern world"; he feels more at home with the past than contemporary culture (Fuller 55). Despite the fact that he cast Gillian Anderson, the star of the popular TV series, *The X Files*, as Lily Bart, Davies himself has never seen the program and is proud of it. Concerning his casting choice, he remarks of Anderson, "she's very good at doing small things with her face and eyes" (Cahir 166). Thus, Davies makes clear, he will rely on visual cues more than verbal ones as a way to chart Lily's course. He draws his artistic influences from the great painters—Rembrandt and Vermeer—more so than contemporary film and television (Fuller 57). And it shows in the lighting of each scene, the pacing of the entire film, as well his handling of early twentieth century customs and mores. Dirge-like at times, the film resists the viewer's taste for fast-paced action, breath-taking vistas and overdrawn melodrama, leaving scenes to be concluded by the subtlety of a downward gaze or a knitted brow.

Davies makes cigarettes the sign of subversive sexual impulses and thus stays true to his commitment to be an emissary of the past. A contemporary audience may have trouble accepting the seriousness of cigarette smoking as a sign of immorality without smoking scenes such as those in the film. Senuously lingering over their cigarettes, Lily and Selden share a dangerous degree of privacy up in his rooms on a hot summer day. Their exchange up until now has consisted of harmless banter: stagy one-liners with a flirtatious edge. Lines like Lily's comment to Lawrence: "It is stupid to be disingenuous, and it's not like you to be

stupid" speckle the scene. But with the introduction of cigarettes, the innocuous give-and-take becomes something much more intimate and dangerous. After witnessing this sultry scene, viewers are better equipped to understand Percy Gryce's horror when he learns that Lily might smoke. Davies transforms smoking into a sexual act; a cigarette is not just a cigarette!

Davies' incorporation of smoking as a visual clue of smoldering sexuality infuses an earlier era's mores with meaning available to twenty-first century viewers. As one critic insists, Davies is "an auteur of nothing if not the past"; his treatment of cigarettes demonstrates this (Fuller 55). Smoking becomes a sign of something promiscuous, and we are thus able to grasp this significance. Gryce is still the prudish bore Wharton made him out to be, but the viewer knows his disgust has some interesting grounds. Indeed, the next smoking scene—immediately after we learn of Gryce's disapproval—leads to the physical intimacy of a kiss in Davies' film.

Before Lily and Selden kiss, the smoke has already linked them visually, suggesting an intimacy of an even greater degree than when we last saw Lily and Selden smoke. The passion of an open-mouthed kiss is certainly a liberty that Wharton did not feel the need to draw on to make her readers understand the feelings shared by Lily and Lawrence Selden. But we live in a different world, and Davies takes that into account by incorporating the physicality of the kiss as a way to make more graphic the feelings experienced by these characters. Accessing the sexual vocabulary of the kiss is a means for Davies to humanize these characters and impart the degree of feeling Lawrence and Lily have for each other. Does it help or hinder the plot? The use of overt sexuality must help a viewer who is not steeped in the Whartonian ways of repressed passion. For that, one must read the book!

Another visual signifier of the importance of sexuality to this film is the body of the actress herself.⁴ Admired as a twenty-first century model of the modern woman because of her portrayal of Agent Scully in *X-Files*, Anderson has been the subject of more internet websites than any other actress (Jones). A good five years older than Wharton's character, she has physical and mental maturity that give extra weight to this character's actions. Because she is as physically supple as she is mentally agile, Anderson's embodiment of Lily is more than just "eye candy"—something pretty to look at. Interestingly, Wharton had originally meant to highlight Lily's decorative status, titling the novel, "A Moment's Ornament." But instead of "A Moment's Ornament," Wharton took a phrase drawn from Ecclesiastes 7:4 for her title: "The heart of the wise

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is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." Lily Bart is often found lacking the wisdom to deal with the foolishness of her fellow characters.

Of course, part of how Lily attracts so much attention, and is thus put under such rigorous demands, is her sheer attractiveness. Described as "a wonderful spectacle" by Lawrence Selden, Lily, as portrayed by Gillian Anderson, is an emblem of flesh and blood loveliness—or rather, "Lilyness." The actress uses her bodiliness to impart a degree of Lily's psychological experience that spoken words would render blunt and flat-footed. For instance, Anderson's Lily is often seen breathing heavily—chest heaving at sharp disappointments as typically as when excited by Selden's amorous attentions. Though in keeping with moments in the novel when Wharton describes Lily's breathing as "gasping for air in a little black-prison house of fears," Davies—and Anderson—takes Lily's breathlessness as a larger metaphor for the physical suffocation of upper-class New York society (140).

Davies finds endless ways to emphasize Lily's physical presence. Seen shifting from side to side as she walks, for instance, Anderson never lets viewers lose sight of the fact that Lily Bart has a body and that it is a sensuous one. To heighten the effect of Anderson's physical lusciousness, Davies casts all the other female characters as dour, dry, even somewhat shriveled women whose clothes are full of gathers and tucks in contrast to the form-fitting garments of Lily Bart. Hair redder than ever and piled voluptuously on her head, Lily is also the only character who wears a visible shade of lipstick. She is by far the most physically and mentally attractive character in the film; no one can hold a candle to Lily Bart, and the film makes this palpably clear. In fact, true to the novel, Anderson's Lily is physically superior to all her fellow characters—even the guys. None of the male leads have the sex appeal of Gillian Anderson. The physical puniness of Eric Stolz, the actor who plays Selden, mirrors his emotional cowardice: he is simply not up to Lily Bart. In the film, he appears outsized when seen next to Lily's hyper-articulated feminine form.

Terence Davies' film style has been described as "tableau-like" in its approach to scene composition (Fuller 57). And, of course, Wharton incorporated a tableau-vivant scene into this novel. Much beloved by both readers and critics, this tableau-vivant scene is an important pivot for the rest of the novel's action. It is somewhat curious, then, that Davies chose not only to change its subject but also to use it as a quick "flash" of a scene, rather than to feature it as Wharton did.⁵ But before delving into Davies' tableau, let's linger on Wharton's first.

With links to literary, artistic and popular sources, the tableau vivant form was a frequent feature of old New York society parties. According to Judith Fryer, Wharton draws upon her knowledge of fine arts (particularly Italian Renaissance painting), upon literary precedents (George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, for example, where Gwendolyn Harleth poses in a tableau vivant as Saint Cecilia), upon contemporary bestsellers (like Constance Cary Harrison's *The Anglomaniacs* [1890]), in which another Lily attends a ball where the table is set out to represent a Veronese painting and she herself is dressed as a Venetian princess, and upon the popularity of tableaux vivants as entertainments in late-nineteenth century America (29).⁶ Tableaux vivants allowed young ladies to flaunt their cultural prowess as well as their physical beauty. As Wharton observed,

tableaux vivants depend for their effect not only on the happy disposal of lights and the delusive interposition of layers of gauze, but on a corresponding adjustment of the mental vision. To unfurnished minds they remain, in spite of every enhancement of art, only a superior kind of wax-works; but to the responsive fancy they may give magic glimpses of the boundary world between fact and imagination (*House of Mirth* 136).

In Wharton's fictional scene, performers draw on paintings from Botticelli to Goya and VanDyck. Each participant selected images that suited her particular features and somehow proposed an interesting storyline that might enhance her socially. Thus, Carry Fisher, the divorcée who manages to remain in society provisionally through a series of dubious alliances, chooses a portrait by Goya of a married woman. As the novel points out: "no one...could have made a more typical Goya than Carry Fisher, with her short dark-skinned face, the exaggerated glow of her eyes, the provocation of her frankly painted smile" (138). From the point of view of character, this text makes clear, Carry has found her visual analogy. All the aspects of her personality are not just featured but heightened by her portrayal in the tableau.

When it is Lily's turn on stage, the importance of lingering on the boundary between fact and imagination becomes even more central. As the curtain parts to reveal her, the vision of Lily is greeted by a "unanimous 'Oh!'" of the spectators as a "tribute, not to the brush work of Reynolds' 'Mrs. Lloyd' but to the flesh and blood loveliness of Lily Bart" (138). Reactions ranging from disdain and shock to admiration and jealousy ripple through the gathered viewers. In case

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readers are confused by the variety of reactions, Wharton makes sure we recognize the tableau's blatant sexuality by having Lily's cousin, Jack Stepney, object to Lily's display "as if she were up at auction" (166). Two other reactions from male viewers register the sexual context significantly. Gus Trenor and Sim Rosedale react to Lily's display frantically. Both resolve to have Lily, either by means of rape (Trenor) or marriage (Rosedale). The rest of the novel virtually follows from the tableau vivant scene, highlighting its importance.

But Davies' inclusion of the tableau is much less freighted than it is in the novel, and a brief discussion of how it differs might be helpful in understanding its significance for the film. Less than a minute in length, the scene barely registers for most viewers. We see Lily featured not as the society matron Mrs. Lloyd, but rather as the mythical figure "Summer," painted by the artist Watteau. Part of what is remarkable about Davies' choice to replace the stately Reynolds portrait of a beautiful society matron with Watteau's rendition of "Summer" is the sexual significance of the figure. Ripened and in season, legs slightly parted, this figure represents Lily as an open blossom whose opulence is on the verge of fading. Foreshadowing her end, to die unmarried with her love unconsummated, Lily holds the scythe towards her own neck. Davies takes the liberty to recast this scene, accentuating the sexual energy of the story.

It is here, too, that Davies introduces viewers to another important element in his *House of Mirth*. As we watch Lawrence Selden and Grace Stepney admire Lily's lovely form, we are made aware of the enormous gulf between Grace and Lily. Lacking the natural beauty and poise of Lily, the ironically named "Grace" seems to have nothing in common with her cousin... except perhaps one thing: a romantic interest in Lawrence Selden. With the introduction of this feature, Davies provides a motive for Grace's subsequent actions. But before pursuing that line of thought, further examination of the sexualization of Lily Bart is in order.

With the visual reference to "Summer," Davies underscores the social impact of Lily's sexualization. Presenting her shortly after the tableau as a scarlet woman whose deep red dress visually distinguishes her, this costume choice is remarkable for the radical contrast it provides between the saturated color of Lily's gown and everyone else's in the theater. Emerging out of a sea of black and white tones, Lily's red dress and hair mark her as visually different from the rest of the crowd. Her outfit's connotations—that she's loose and conspicuous—are given voice by the conversation that takes place between Lily's Aunt Julia and her cousin

Grace Stepney in a nearby box. Favoring what's called "continuity editing"—a form of editing that renders scene changes unobtrusive to viewers—Davies uses the seamlessness of the film images to heighten the plot's inevitability. We see what's going on around Lily in a way that she never can. Cast as social voyeurs and witnesses to Lily's doom, viewers are ever implicated in the outcome as a result of Davies' use of continuity editing throughout the film.

We might also focus on the film's setting as contributing to its overall impression. Shot in Glasgow, Scotland, rather than in New York, due to budget constraints, the film tends to focus on the individual actors instead of on the world in which they live. Though produced for mainstream audiences, this film doesn't express the dominant view of this class of people as, say, a Merchant/Ivory production might. Few scenes include the lush settings and material lavishness we have become accustomed to seeing when viewing Merchant/Ivory films—dubbed "heritage films" by film critics—about upper-class society. Utterly lacking the nostalgia expressed by these other films, Davies keeps us close up and locked into the confining social spaces that represent Lily's world, more so than the material one. Rarely do we get a view of anything much beyond an establishing shot to provide context. Though some have attributed the close-up composition of shot to Davies' budget for the film, it seems to suit his interest in the novel perfectly.⁷ Less inclined to dwell on the attributes of material wealth in his past films and more interested in the personal story, he makes Lily's encounters central and not their settings.

Of course Davies does use setting to advance his interpretation of the story. About his favorite painter, Vermeer, Davies admits, "What I love is the ravishing use of light falling through a window upon a subject" (Fuller 57). We see him transfer his admiration for Vermeer's style into visual effects in the film. Most frames of this film feature a shaft of light, glowing within an otherwise dark interior. Light—when it does appear—has the decidedly cool and damp character of Scotland. Furthermore, scene lighting illuminates—usually only partially—Lily's features without really showing us her face. Draped, veiled, lowered or in profile, her face evades the viewer's gaze as her beauty eludes her admirers. We might crane our necks and squint to see more of Lily, but the camera will always deprive us of a full view of her. It is not until the very end of the film—after Lily writes the check to Gus Trenor—that we see her full face in the mirror, visually suggesting that in this moment Lily is finally able to live up to her image of herself.

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Though the seasons seem to change, up until a certain point in the film, the clothes never really do. That's because the seasons are social—artificial constructions around a social calendar rather than a solar one. Once Lily is on the outs, however, we start seeing jackets and hats, leaves in the wind and rain. The elements only affect the underclasses—the working masses whom Lily is hoping to join in order to survive. Indeed, Davies incorporates a degree of class-consciousness into the film that Wharton did not. Once she has decided to use the letters to regain entry into society by blackmailing Bertha, she becomes "one of the people" in Davies' film. Rushing off to the Dorsets in a scene Davies invented for his film, she passes a demonstrator. As he cries out to an unseen crowd, "Let me tell you about the plight of the poor people of Russia under the Czar!" Davies links Lily's struggle to survive to the vocabulary of communism and the Russian revolution, marking her as one of the people, one of "us."⁹

Up to this point the focus has been on Davies' additions and adaptations. Now let us dwell briefly on a few important omissions. Many critics have spoken about Wharton's anti-Semitism. Famous for admiring F. Scott Fitzgerald's character Wolfshiem from *The Great Gatsby* as "a perfect little Jew," Wharton's own work features Jewish characters drawn in stereotypically anti-Semitic fashion. Davies—with a view to our contemporary sensitivity to racial and ethnic slurs, according to interviews—sought to lessen this effect. He deliberately chose to cast Rosedale without the Semitic overtones that characterize him in the novel. His choice of Anthony Lapaglia, an Italian actor instead of a Jewish one, helps suggest this change. Davies said he found the "anti-Semitism the most dispiriting thing about Wharton's work" and so he "deleted it" (Cahir 169). What is lost here is the character's "otherness," however, established through his Jewishness.⁹ This omission, though it does "modernize" Wharton's vision, also trivializes it. Lily's rejection of the only person who goes out of his way to help her becomes difficult to grasp without the ugly taint of anti-Semitism to mark her disgust as tribal rather than frivolous and potentially vain. And that Wharton considered Rosedale—and his Jewishness—a deeply significant aspect of the novel is registered in the second title she almost gave the book: "The Year of the Rose."¹⁰

What is perhaps the most significant omission is the absence of a female character named Gerty Farish. Significant in the novel as Lily's "road not taken," Gerty lives the life of an independent modern woman. She has a job, lives in an apartment by herself, and pursues a range of interests barred to Lily in her capacity

as a young marriageable woman. Though we know that Gerty—like Lily—is in love with Selden, marriage is not, as Lily has claimed it, her object in life. Rather plain and unassuming, the figure of Gerty offers an important counterpoint to the more demonic Grace we meet in the film and the less than dependable Carry Fisher. Gerty also helps us love Lily all the more. We admire her beauty, and we want—on some level—for her to be able to maintain it in the manner to which she is most accustomed. Though Gerty's life is a viable one, it will not do for Lily Bart, in her mind or ours. Thus, the character of Gerty Farish helps us understand that Lily is not just a victim but also a willing participant—as we are—in her drama.

What Davies does do with this character is to meld her with the Grace Stepney character, making his Grace Stepney—played brilliantly by Johdi May—the most repugnant character in the film. The insidious and conniving author of Lily's doom with her Aunt Julia in the opera scene, Grace's betrayal exceeds that of Bertha Dorset, the true villain in the novel. Bertha Dorset's rejection of Lily—dictated by her need to hide her infidelity—results in Lily being shunned by the entire clan for something she did not do. She's an innocent victim. What is lost as a result of Davies' change in story line is the historical critique of the values honored by old New York society. In its place, the impact of Lily's downfall takes on a different meaning: Grace's vicious sabotage of Lily is mainly the result of a sexual struggle.

Perpetually billed as the "lady novelist" because of her family's prominence and wealth, Edith Wharton knew that the social and financial world she operated in and wrote about was never concerned with the "man with the dinner pail" as was the fashion in fiction at the time (*A Backward Glance* 206). Perhaps the most celebrated example of Wharton's ruthless referendum on the failings of the leisure class can be found in her 1905 best seller *The House of Mirth*. Ruling that "a frivolous society can acquire dramatic significance only through what its frivolity destroys," Wharton sacrificed her much beloved character to make a point (*A Backward Glance* 147). *The House of Mirth* chronicles that deterioration through the events that befall the character Lily Bart. While Lily is nominally part of the upper-echelon social set that she mixes with, she lacks the accompanying fortune to attract a suitable husband. As the novel unfolds, the inescapable need to bankroll her beauty puts Lily in compromising circumstances of mounting

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seriousness. Unless Lily can "improve" herself through marriage (as all women of this class and period had to) she will deteriorate entirely. Lily's lack of funds—not a lack of character, family background, upbringing, or beauty—brings the novel to a crisis. Her predicament is decisively a sign of the times, and Wharton sacrifices the lovely Lily Bart to those times in order to criticize the way of life that created such circumstances. And here Davies' own assessment of the savagery depicted in Wharton's novel might be useful. "In Wharton," Davies observes, "not only are the gloves off, but there's blood on the walls" (Winter 60).

In Davies' filmic adaptation, Lily Bart's story also focuses on the constraints of gender; but for Davies, the conflicts imposed by gender norms and stereotypes threaten Lily's sexuality, and that's what ultimately kills her. As the film marches on to its inevitable close, we witness Lily's ultimate renunciation. Having said goodbye to Lawrence Selden in the previous scene, we know Lily's end—like so many of her other actions—is self-directed. With the dress she wore in the sexually explicit tableau of Watteau's painting "Summer" as a backdrop, her suicide puts an end to desire.¹¹ And while we mourn her death, our hearts are transformed by the wisdom of Lily's lesson. As Davies observes about human suffering: "I have always just felt that you have to endure, and make the best of it. But that's being altered now slightly by a feeling of...not despair, but a disillusionment with the arbitrariness of everything. You then realize that suffering doesn't mean anything, and very often it doesn't make you a better person. It makes some people more compassionate, but others, it just makes them harder" (Winter 60). We see all of this demonstrated by the film's end. Grace has become an ossified monster, ruthlessly refusing to help Lily when she pleads, "Grace, I am at the end of my tether"—a line that Davies wrote for his film. Grace's suffering—brought on by her unrequited and not even noticed love for Lawrence Selden—has made her hard, bitter and vengeful. And Davies, in opting to feature so carefully Lily's last scene as a tableau mort, tells us that her death must mean more to us than such a life. "We resist the great temptations, but it is the little ones that pull us down," Lily tells Selden during their last meeting. As the film ends, we do not long for the world that Lily Bart lived in, but for one more like our own.

Notes

¹ This paper was first presented at The Mount as part of their women of achievement series. Special thanks to

Scott Marshall and Stephanie Copeland who invited me to present this material.

² In this sense, this article partakes of a larger discussion. Among film theorists the issue of adaptation is undergoing revision. See Corrigan and Stam for sample positions. Belen Vidal Villasur's piece on *House of Mirth* and *Age of Innocence*, "Classic Adaptations, Modern Reinventions: Reading the Image in the Contemporary Literary Film," *Screen* 43 (1): 5-18, (Spring 2002) 3-18, has been especially useful in demonstrating the critical importance of this revision in the adaptation of Wharton's works to the screen. She writes, "A different critical approach is needed which stresses the operations of rewriting conducted by these films rather than underplaying their singularity" (7). She calls this category of film "the literary film" acknowledging that this type of film "presents different levels of play between the central intertext and the modes of subjectivity inscribed into the films' mise-en-scene of the past" (8). The importance of this new way of considering the literary film allows us to take seriously the cultural impact of film on the popularity of the literary text. Thanks to both Martin Scorsese's *Age of Innocence* and Terence Davies's *House of Mirth*, these two works by Wharton returned to best seller lists and came alive once more—or for the first time—for a contemporary readership.

³ As Villasur notes, "These films are first and foremost symptomatic of the contemporary imagination, offering unfamiliar takes on familiar myths" (5).

⁴ Villasur describes Anderson's physicality as introducing an element of the superbodily, the body that goes beyond the limits of physical space and becomes metaphorical (16).

⁵ Villasur makes much of this, 15-17. Also see "Summer's End" for a discussion of the change in artistic reference.

⁶ For a more contemporary and equally fascinating treatment of tableaux vivants see Chapman.

⁷ See Linda Costanzo Cahir's interview with Davies for details on the relationship between budget and aesthetic choices.

⁸ Indeed, this scene, for many critics, is the one that invites the most attention. Entirely manufactured by Davies for the film to—in his own words—"humanize" Lily, many object to the "lowering" of Lily to this level. In my reading, Davies' invention matters less to the overall value of the film than it might to other critics, since I accept it as part of the larger transformation Davies has enacted on Lily as a hyper-sexualized figure in his effort to "adapt" her character to his twenty-first century audience. See Cahir 169-70.

⁹ For one of the first and most important studies of

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Rosedale's Jewishness as a narrative trope of otherness, see Irene Goldman-Price's: "The Perfect Jew and the House of Mirth: A Study of Point of View" in *Edith Wharton's House of Mirth: A Casebook*, edited by Carol J. Singley (NY: Oxford, 2003): 163-181.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the marking of Rosedale as Jewish as part of Wharton's use of the literary language of race, see my chapter on Wharton in *Truth Stranger than Fiction: Race, Realism and the US Literary Marketplace* (NY: Palgrave, 2002).

¹¹ As Villasur provocatively explains the power of this scene for the viewer, "the death of female subjectivity signals the birth of memory," calling it "the true tableau" of the film (16).

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"More and More Never Apart" Edith Wharton and Henry James at the Mount

A Reading for two actors compiled and arranged by Scott Marshall from the letters of Edith Wharton and Henry James and from *A Backward Glance* by Edith Wharton.*

Henry James: Dear Mrs. Wharton... Yours most cordially, Henry James

Edith Wharton: Dear Mr. James... Yours sincerely, Edith Wharton

Henry James: My dear Edith... Ever and always, Henry James

Edith Wharton: Dear Henry James... Yours, Edith

Henry James: My very dear Friend, Your devotissimo, Henry James

Edith Wharton: Cher Maitre... Affectionately yours, Edith

Henry James: Dearest, dearest Edith... Yours all & always, H.J.

Edith Wharton: Dearest Cher Maitre: Your devoted Edith

Henry James: Dear and unsurpassable distinguished old Friend!... I am meanwhile prostrate before the glory of your greatness, and am your devotedest old Henry James

Edith Wharton: What is one's personality, detached from that of the friends with whom fate happens to have linked one? I cannot think of myself apart from the influence of the two or three greatest friendships of my life, and any account of my own growth must be that of their stimulating and enlightening influence... As for the date of the meeting which finally drew Mr. James and myself together, without hesitations or preliminaries, we could neither of us ever recall when or where that happened. All we knew was that suddenly it was as if we had always been friends, and were to go on being (as he wrote to me in February 1910)

Henry James: more and more never apart.

No one fully knows our Edith who hasn't seen her in the act of creating a habitation for herself. (**as narrator**): A letter to Ogden Codman, August 1, 1900

Edith Wharton: Dear Cuddy, Teddy and I have so enjoyed the past weeks in this beautiful corner of Western New England. The truth is I am in love with this place—climate, scenery, life and all.

Henry James (as narrator): Eight months later, a letter to Sara Norton, March 21, 1901

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Edith Wharton: Dear Sally, We have bought the Sargeant Farm at Lenox—I think when you were here we were "negotiating" for it... & we are going to begin building in April.

Henry James (as narrator): Just over a year later, on June 7, 1902, another letter to Sally Norton

Edith Wharton: Dear Sally, Lenox has had its usual tonic effect on me, & I feel like a new edition, revised & corrected, in Berkeley Updike's best type. It is great fun out at the place now, too—everything is pushing up new shoots—not only cabbages & strawberries in the kitchen garden, but electric lights & plumbing. I really think we shall be installed—after a fashion—by September 1st.

Henry James (as narrator): A letter to her publisher at Charles Scribner's and Sons, September 12, 1902

Edith Wharton: Dear Mr. Brownell, Many thanks for the cheque for \$2,191.81/100, which even to the 81 cents is welcome to an author in the last throes of house-building—

Henry James (as narrator): Two and a half weeks later, on September 30, 1902, a letter to Sara Norton

Edith Wharton: *Finalmente!* A moment in which to thank you... Since we have begun to move in (the process has been so prolonged that I can only put it in that way) ...I am beginning now to recover my sense of proportion... We have been in the new house for ten days, & have enjoyed every minute of it. The views are exquisite, & it is all so still & sylvan...

Henry James: One month later, in October 1902 from Rye, England, I penned a missive to my good friend, Mary Cadwallader Jones

Edith Wharton: (my sister-in-law)

Henry James: Dear Mrs. Cadwallader, I assisted dimly, through your discreet page, at your visit to Mrs. Wharton, whose Lenox house must be a love, and I wished I could have been less remotely concerned.

Edith Wharton: Exactly two years later, in October 1904, Mr. James made the first of his three visits to The Mount.

Edith Wharton: Because of Henry James's visits to The Mount, it is perhaps best to put his name first on the list of friends who composed my closest group during the years I lived here, and those that followed. He came several times for lengthy visits at The Mount. Those long days here, in the deep summer glow or the crisp glitter of autumn, the walks in the woods, motor-flights over hill and dale, evening talks on the moonlit terrace and readings around the library fire...

(as narrator): During his first visit, a letter to Howard Sturgis, October 17, 1904, written from The Mount

Henry James: My dear Howard, This elegant, thus wonderful abode, where I have been since Saturday...is an exquisite and marvelous place, a delicate French chateau mirrored in a Massachusetts pond (repeat not this formula), and a monument to the almost too impeccable taste of its so accomplished mistress.

Every comfort prevails, and you needn't bring supplementary apples or candies in your dressing-bag. The Whartons are kindness and hospitality incarnate, the weather is glorious-golden, the scenery of a high class, and we yearn for you...

Your train is the 10:45 from the South Station... You book (and check) through to Lee, but you change at *Pittsfield*, which you reach at 3, waiting there until 3:20. Then you take a little local train which brings you on past Lenox, to Lee Station, which you reach at 3:40—for a drive of a short two miles to this house. I shall try my very best to meet you at Lee...

Edith Wharton: And six days later, a letter of October 23, 1904, to my sister-in-law Minnie Jones

Henry James: Dearest Benefactress: I need scarcely tell you that I am very happy here, surrounded by every loveliness of nature & every luxury of art & treated with a benevolence that brings tears to my eyes.

Edith Wharton: The motor-car had restored the romance of travel and Mr. James was eager to partake of this new adventure. A letter of October 22, 1904, from The Mount to Jessie Allen:

Henry James: My dear generous Goody, I have been won over to motoring, for which the region is, in spite of bad roads, delightful—the mountain-and-valley, lake-and-river beauty extends so far, and goes on and on that even the longest spins do not take one out of it.

Edith Wharton: And on his second visit, a letter of July 7, 1905 from The Mount to his brother, William James

Henry James: Dearest William, I greatly enjoy the whole Lenox countryside, seeing it as I did by the aid of the Whartons' big commodious motor, which has fairly converted me to the sense of all the thing may do for one and one may get from it... if I were rich I shouldn't hesitate to take up with it. A great transformer of life and of the future!

Edith Wharton: But on one occasion his stay with us coincided with a protracted heat wave; a wave of such unusual intensity that even the nights, usually cool and airy at The Mount, were as stifling as the days. My own dislike of heat filled me with sympathy for James, whose sufferings were acute and uncontrollable. His bodily surface, already broad,

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seemed to expand, and his imagination to become a part of his body, so that the one dripped words of distress as the other did moisture.

Electric fans, iced drinks and cold baths seemed to give no relief; and finally we discovered that the only panacea was incessant motoring. While we were moving he was refreshed and happy, his spirits rose, and the twinkle returned to lips and eyes.

James was to leave for England in about a fortnight; but his sufferings distressed me so much that, feeling sure that there was nothing to detain him in America if he chose to go, I asked a friend who was staying in the house to propose my telephoning for a passage on a Boston steamer which was sailing within two days. My ambassador executed the commission and hurried back with the report that the mere hint of such a plan had thrown James into a state of helpless perturbation.

Henry James: To change my sailing plans at two days' notice—to get from The Mount to Boston

Edith Wharton: (four hours by train)

Henry James: in two days—how could the Lady of Lenox lightly suggest anything so impracticable? And what about my heavy luggage, which is at my brother William's in New Hampshire? And my wash, which was sent to the laundry only yesterday afternoon?

Edith Wharton: Between the electric fan clutched in his hand, and the pile of sucked oranges at his elbow, he cowered there, a mountain of misery, repeating in a sort of low despairing chant:

Henry James: Good God, what a woman—what a woman! Her imagination boggles at nothing! She does not even scruple to project me in naked flight across the Atlantic...

Edith Wharton: The heat collapse had been as nothing to the depths into which my rash proposal had plunged him, and it took several hours to quiet him down and persuade him that, if he preferred enduring the weather to flying from it, we were only too glad to keep him at The Mount.

During happier times, James's reading aloud for us was a thing apart, an emanation of his inmost self, unaffected by fashion or elocutionary artifice. He read from his soul... One day at The Mount someone spoke of Whitman, and it was a joy for me to discover that James thought him, as I did, the greatest of American poets. *Leaves of Grass* was put into his hands, and all that evening we sat rapt while he wandered from

Henry James: "The Song of Myself"

Edith Wharton: to

Henry James: "When lilacs last in the door-yard

bloomed"

Edith Wharton: His voice filled the hushed room like an organ adagio... We talked long that night of *Leaves of Grass*, tossing back and forth to each other treasure after treasure...

I believe James enjoyed those days at The Mount as much as he did (or could) anything connected with the American scene; and the proffer of it is the length of his visits and their frequency.

I yearn back to those lost hours, all the while aware that those who read or hear of them must take their gaiety, their jokes and laughter on faith, yet unable to detach my memory from them, and loath not to give others a glimpse of the James unknown to less intimate eyes. He was perhaps the most intimate friend I ever had, though in many ways we were so different...

Henry James: Lamb House, Rye, England, 8 February 1910. Dearest Edith... When one is still sickish & shaky (though that, thank goodness, is slowly ebbing) one tumbles wrong—even when one has wanted to make the most delicate geste in life. But the great thing is that we always tumble together—more & more never apart; & for that happy exercise and sweet coincidence of agility we may trust ourselves & each other to the end of time...

Edith Wharton: [softly] ...to the end of time... more & more never apart...

[End]

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